

# Book review

## Ethnic and Minority Cultures as Tourist Attractions

*Edited by Diekmann A. and Smith M.K.*  
*Channel View Publications*

*Bristol*

*2015*

*xiii+184pp.*

*Keywords Tourism*

*Review DOI*

*10.1108/JTF-09-2017-063*

Many forms of tourism facilitate engagement with the “other” for both hosts and guests or, more correctly, for service providers and their customers, as well as for residents and other users of destination areas. Sometimes these interactions promote information exchange, understanding and mutual tolerance, but at other times they are uncomfortable and reinforce stereotypes. At the time of writing this review, contentious elections have taken place in both North America and Europe, and hitherto sometimes muted concerns about migration, terrorism, racism, sexism, religion, identity, inequality and power relationships have surfaced and are receiving enormous attention by the media, both traditional and social. Thus, the topic of this book is of immense current concern and the political climate is one in which changes may be anticipated in relationships between majority and minority peoples. The role of tourism in mediating contentious relationships, therefore, should be of substantial current interest.

Urban tourism, in spite of its magnitude, has been slow to gain attention commensurate with its importance. The editors of this work claim that ethnic and minority tourism have attracted more attention in rural as opposed to urban settings. There is some justification for the former claim regarding ethnicity, but less for the latter for gay and lesbian tourism, for example, has received almost no attention outside of urban settings. Some may argue that ethnic clusters, slums and LGBTQ communities are sufficiently different as places and tourist destinations that they merit separate coverage, whereas others may see strong similarities and appreciate the diversity that their inclusion brings to the book. Nevertheless, few will deny that these topics are current and that their discussion is timely

with considerable implications for urban landscapes and lives, as well as tourism.

The authors claim justifiably that the book examines “from various perspectives the global phenomenon of ethnic, migrant and minority communities that face or choose tourism development” (p. 215). They also identify 11 key issues that are the focus of attention (p. 13). These range from theoretical developments to past and present models of urban policy and planning, and recommendations that focus upon guiding the development of ethnic and minority communities. These tasks are addressed by academic authors through 11 main chapters plus a brief introduction and conclusion. In the end, the editors admit that there are both similarities and differences, communities are complex and not homogeneous, outcomes are contingent and there is no “grand narrative”.

The work is divided into four main sections: sociocultural developments, community perceptions, visitor experiences and development policies. Inevitably, the contents of these sections are not distinct for, as the editors acknowledge, in reality issues are interrelated and overlap. Each section consists of three and, in one case two, chapters, and is introduced by short but useful sections by the editors. The contents are varied in both topics and locations so that it is likely that even the most well-informed reader will be exposed to new materials. Most chapters introduce topics and illustrate these by case studies. For example, Asian identities are explored in London, followed by a discussion of Roma tourism in Hungary, guided tours in Brussels, intercultural change in multiple locations, place perceptions in a settlement in Israel, slum tourism in Mumbai and also in Rio in India and Brazil, respectively, Chinatowns in Australia, ethnic tourism in China, Jewish culture and tourism in Budapest and, finally, the gay quarter in Cape Town, South Africa.

Most cases provide a brief historical context, with reference to antecedents such as colonialism but the emphasis is on the contemporary and the recent past. Regarding future tourism, the topic is not considered explicitly but is implicit in the discussions of

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planning and policy, where greater involvement of minorities is seen as a widespread requirement.

The work contains no photographs and very little quantitative information. The topics would seem to lend themselves to the former. The latter reflects an emphasis on concepts and ideas, which is a strength of the book, and will mean that it will have a longer life because graphical and statistical information can become dated very quickly. However, it also means that in most cases one does not learn exactly how many business are involved, how many visitors are attracted, how much they spend, or what proportions of residents hold particular views or, indeed, exact definitions of study areas. This is acceptable in a book but would be less so in journal articles. Such precise information is difficult to acquire.

The editors have done an excellent job in ensuring that there is consistency in style among chapters. Their own contributions provide useful conceptual discussions rather than superficial descriptions of the contents of

chapters as is common in many edited books.

As I read the book, I identified a number of topics that are glossed over, such as the role festivals and special events, and the documentation and interpretation of landscape change. These and other research needs are identified very briefly in the conclusion.

Overall, I found the book easy to read, free of unnecessary jargon, with a focus on important themes, illustrated by a wide range of examples from many parts of the world. It is a very useful and timely contribution to the literature, could be used as a course text, and provides a foundation on which others can certainly build.

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