

## Preface

### THE SPECIAL INTEREST TOURISM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

#### Guest Editors

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Over years, scholars of all stripes have interrogated on non-western forms of tourism. In fact, after the debate left by Dean MacCannell, John Urry and Daniel Boorstin, who argued that tourism was a product of modernity, which can be found in Europe, scholars assumed that there is nothing like tourism in other non-western cultures. This stance led to think that non-western economies may develop sustainable economic programs, supported by tourism, only if a process of modernization starts. In his seminal book, *Tourism: passport to development?*, Emanuel de Kadt acknowledged that the political instability and the development were inextricably intertwined. In other terms,

he realized that those nations which were subdued to a system of exploitation and slavery were less prone to development than others nations. Some peripheral nations military occupied by European powers developed a trauma that prevented successfully the adoption of development-related programs while others which had not such experiences did it great. From the moment these texts saw the light of publicity onwards, scholarship cemented the idea that tourism and development were inevitably entwined.

Nowadays, new emergent non-western forms of tourism are surfacing. This ranges from Halal tourism towards the SIT (Special Interest Tourism), which focuses on green habits and sustainable consumption. Muslim tourism, to put this in other terms, evinces not only that non-western communities structure their own forms of tourism, as well as rites of passage, but also that the dichotomy between the sacred and the profane, a point that illuminated the specialized literature in tourism in years, should at least reconsidered (Krippendorf, 2010; Korstanje & Busby 2010; Cardona, Azpellicueta Criado & Serra Cantallops, 2015; Serra & Cardona 2015; Korstanje 2018).

Paradoxically, the idea of development as it was originally thought ethnocentrically divides the world in two: developed and undeveloped nations. Southeast Asia offers an interesting answer to what extent tourism can be feasible in non-western cultures, many of them whipped by political instability and civil war. Or what is worse, by the cruelty of colonial powers which ransacked the continent. For scholars, SIT is today a promising platform towards development or a new ideological discourse oriented to reinforce the centre-periphery dependency.

As the previous backdrop, the present special issue begins with a paper aimed at exploring the strengths of Lower Kinabatangan (Malaysia Borneo). This empirical approach stresses the logical contradictions and ideals of eco-tourism to be adopted in rural zones or precapitalistic communists. Although the locals are open to eco-tourism, no less true is that there are serious material asymmetries between local forms of organization and the infrastructure, which is needed to receive first world tourists.

The second paper discusses the effects and problems of Islamic Tourism in Indonesia. As the first work suggested, here authors say that the infrastructure to European segments seems to be the main obstacle towards development.

The third manuscript continues the old debate left by Butler in 1980 revolving around the life cycles of tourist destinations. In a moment of crisis where destinations and policymakers do their best not to decline, SIT offers fertile grounds towards new forms of tourism towards long-term sustainable growth.

The same comments above noted are replicated in the fourth paper, which delves into the SWOT model to be applied in Special Interest Tourism. The fifth research highlights the importance to promote the ecological consumption to create the necessary synergy to protect the tourist system, while the last one signals to the advantages and disadvantages of Islamic Tourism in Southeast Asia.

We, as guest editors, want to express our immense gratitude to Jean Henrique Costa, who as editor in chief of the prestige journal 'Turismo: Estudos e Práticas' hosted by The Universidade do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte (UERN), Brazil and in a disinterested effort, welcomed the content of this special issue, which not only sheds light on Special Interest Tourism in Southeast Asia but also places as a must-read material for South American scholars and students.

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