

# Furthering Critical Approaches in Tourism and Hospitality Studies: Perspectives from Australia and New Zealand

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The social sciences have accommodated changes in methodological and epistemological thought. These include 'new' sociology/cultural studies (e.g., Atkinson, 1990; Du Gay, 1997; Long, 1997), new cultural and human geographies (e.g., Jackson, 1993; Mansvelt, 2005; Massey, 2005) and new leisure studies (Aitchison, 1999). In these cases, the term new does not imply creation of new sub-disciplines, or a total rejection of earlier or 'traditional' thinking, but rather it is used as a broad reference to communicate a diversity of work that transgresses the disciplinary boundaries to knowledge construction.

As tourism and hospitality studies are fields in which a diverse range of disciplines have exercised their influence, it is surprising that only recently have these broader philosophical and methodological issues begun to be incorporated (e.g., Franklin & Crang, 2001; Hollinshead 1999; Phillimore & Goodson, 2004; Tribe, 1997). However, studies addressing a whole variety of issues such as power, 'Othering', gender, race, sexuality, embodiment, subjectivity and alternative methodologies (Aitchison, 2001; Hollinshead & Jamal, 2007; Johnston, 2001; Pritchard, 2004) demonstrate that we are now following the lead of the social sciences, and moving into the field of new tourism research (Tribe, 2005). Tribe contends that tourism and hospitality studies are beginning to make a slow retreat from the binds of logical empiricism (which we would argue are still firmly entrenched within tourism and hospitality academia). In doing so, Tribe

argues, we have moved beyond a strait-jacketed fascination with positivistic research to embrace more reflexive and critical paths of inquiry.

Within the new tourism (and hospitality) studies, tourism and hospitality research are demonstrating an emerging 'critical turn' (Ateljevic et al., 2005) — a shift in thought that embraces interpretive, alternative and critical modes of enquiry (Ateljevic et al., 2007). This turn follows similar breaks from tradition in other disciplines, particularly those seen in the post-Third Moment interpretive, linguistic, critical, and constructivist turns in the social sciences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). As in the social sciences, there is currently debate and discussion about what we mean by 'critical' in the tourism and hospitality fields (e.g., is it critical theory? critical realism? critical thinking? critical reflection?). This is not surprising, argues Brookfield (2005, p. 11), because 'criticality is a contested idea, one with a variety of meanings each claimed by different groups for very different purposes. How the term *critical* is used inevitably reflects the ideology and worldview of the user' (emphasis in original).

That is, a critical approach includes under its umbrella a range of social-science perspectives and fields (or a post-disciplinary combination of these), such as postmodernism, poststructuralism, critical theory, critical realism, feminist/gender theory, race studies, and also methodologies like qualitative research, interpretivism, ethnography, phenomenology, feminist research, memory-work, Indigenous research and critical discourse analysis. Essentially, we take the view that there is no single way to undertake critical tourism and hospitality research and teaching. While there will always be diversity and overlap in how we each interpret the meaning of 'critical' tourism and hospitality studies, we prefer to use the term 'critical approach'

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to encompass the array of critical methods, theories and philosophies in use.

While ontological, epistemological and methodological differences may exist, those employing a critical approach would generally be concerned with resisting positivist modes of enquiry, unmasking power relations, seeking emancipation, addressing inequalities, or calling for change or action within the field they are exploring (Brookfield, 2005; hooks, 2003). Critical tourism and hospitality scholars are also drawn to these ideals. Tribe (2007, p. 30) offers that critical tourism scholars are drawn to ideas of hope, utopia, and the 'good life for tourism'. He notes further that for those in tourism and hospitality taking a critical approach,

...the current ordering of things is deliberately foregrounded. Power is a key issue to be researched and a critical approach to tourism would seek to expose whose interests are served and the exercise of power and the influence of ideology in the researched situation and the research itself (p. 30).

In essence, then, critical tourism and hospitality academics are, for the large part, interested in deconstructing the cultural politics of tourism and hospitality research and teaching, and the relation of these to their wider political, economic, cultural and social contexts. Critical tourism and hospitality scholars are also self-consciously concerned with and reflexive about the impacts of their research and teaching on their own personal, emotional and professional lives, and the lives of the students, colleagues and community members with whom they live and work. In making this latter point, we feel it is important to underscore Brookfield's (2005) point that critical theorising is not something that happens solely within the confines of the academic institution, nor should it be restricted to a select few. In applying critical approaches, theories and methods to understand the social worlds of tourism and hospitality, we are effectively speaking of and to our everyday worlds. To quote Brookfield (2005, p. 3) again:

A theory is nothing more (or less) than a set of explanatory understandings that help us make sense of some aspect of the world. To the extent that making sense of existence is a natural human activity, it is accurate to say that we are all theorists and that we all theorise.

Select examples of recent critical approaches and methods employed in tourism and hospitality research in Australia and New Zealand include: a polysemic reading of tourist brochures (Edelheim, 2007); a critical discourse analysis of inflight magazines (Small, Harris, & Wilson, 2008); a deconstruction of Robyn Davidson's travel writings (Fullagar, 2007); a reflection on teaching critically in business education (Fallon, 2006); a theoretical piece on reflexivity in tourism studies (Ateljevic et al., 2005); a personal account of work-life balance for women in tourism academe (Small et al., 2007); studies of indigenous engagement in tourism (Nielsen, 2007; Russell-Mundine, 2007) and a critical discourse exploration of the personal experiences of commercial home hosts in New Zealand (Harris, McIntosh, & Lewis, 2007).

While this select suite of works shows that critical approaches are being explored in tourism and hospitality research in Australia and New Zealand, many of us are located in business and management schools that may not

readily support such perspectives, considering critical research unprofitable or unpalatable to industry. Until recently, we, as a group of critical scholars, have had to look to the United Kingdom and Europe for support, inspiration and collegial events. Critical approaches to tourism and hospitality studies are now well-established internationally, particularly within British and European universities. For example, there have been two recent Critical Tourism conferences held in Europe (Dubrovnik 2005 and Split 2007). Both of these events have been attended by academics from all over the world, and a number of publications have emerged from the papers presented at these conferences (e.g., Pritchard, et al., 2007; Ateljevic, Pritchard & Morgan, 2007; plus a number of special journal editions). With regard to hospitality, the Council for Hospitality Management Education (CHME) recently held their annual conference in 2008, at which critical hospitality studies formed a major theme. A number of critical hospitality texts have also emerged in the United Kingdom (Lashley, Lynch, & Morrison, 2007; Molz & Gibson, 2007). Still in the United Kingdom, a senior academic position was just advertised specifically in the field of Critical Tourism Studies.

During a recent visit to Auckland University Technology from the United Kingdom, hospitality professor Paul Lynch (2008) made a seminar presentation in which he drew attention to the underserved power of hospitality studies as an academic tool. His goal was to signal a new research and teaching agenda that would empower and enhance the subject of hospitality and facilitate the development of students of hospitality as 'philosophic practitioners' (Tribe, 2002). Lynch also explored implications of the 'social lens' approach (Lashley, Lynch, & Morrison, 2007), whereby scholars are concerned with the study of hospitality not only in terms of its applications for management, but also as for its own sake — as a way of better understanding society.

Given the increasing number of tourism and hospitality academics, researchers and postgraduate students in Australia and New Zealand who are employing critical approaches and methodologies, further support for a critical voice is needed here. While there is still evident resistance to critical approaches in tourism and hospitality research, we welcome in particular the recent Special Interest Group (SIG) scheme initiated by CAUTHE. In 2007, around 20 critical scholars successfully applied to this scheme, forming the CATH (Critical Approaches in Tourism and Hospitality) group (many of whom are international CAUTHE members). As many of us working under a critical banner have found, critical perspectives are often marginalised, if not ignored altogether, in mainstream journals and conference events. While a number of critical scholars in Australia and New Zealand had formed their own research network and held events (for example, the Critical Tourism Studies 'Down Under' Inaugural Symposium, held at UTS in Sydney, 2006), the formalisation of the CATH SIG represents an important step in being legitimised within the mainstream academy. The CATH SIG will also ensure that early career researchers and postgraduate students, in particular, have a voice to

challenge and be critical of tourism/hospitality research, an ability to use alternative research methodologies, and opportunities to network with other academics who would support their work.

The aims of CATH are to:

1. promote and discuss the role of tourism and hospitality research/education through critical and alternative voices, texts and methodologies
2. explore the personal, the political and the situated nature of research and teaching in tourism and hospitality
3. provide a forum for research collaboration and the mentoring of emerging tourism and hospitality researchers
4. promote and legitimise spaces for interpretive and critical modes of inquiry, with particular emphasis on multi/post-disciplinary research on the following:
  - embodiment, performance and identities
  - gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, class and disability
  - social justice and social inequality
  - mobilities and globalisation
  - empowerment, community and entrepreneurship
  - materiality, lifestyle and cultural practices
  - representation, language and culture
  - positionality, perspectivity and reflexivity
  - emotional dynamics of research
  - cultural politics of publishing and academic renewal
  - critical methodologies and paradigms.

At the CATH SIG's inaugural meeting at CAUTHE in February, 2008, a number of issues, concerns and ideas were raised regarding the future of critical tourism and hospitality studies in Australia and New Zealand. These included:

- the importance of considering both critical hospitality *and* tourism research agendas (as well as links to leisure, marketing, workplace relation, and so on)
- re-engagement with the study of hospitality as a social (not just managerial) phenomenon
- definition of what we mean by critical approaches/criticality, and links to emerging post/a-disciplinarity
- focus on deconstructing the academy, and the ways we construct/do research
- link between critical research AND teaching (nexus between the two)
- the need to include, support and foster postgraduate students, often at the 'cutting edge' with critical approaches
- better links between existing tourism/ hospitality/leisure networks (e.g., ATLAS, CHME, ANZALS, The Australian Sociological Association)

Pritchard and Morgan (2007, p. 19) recently argued that we are all responsible as academics for our role in socialising the next generation of scholars into the tourism academy, 'through our entry requirements, our ideological parameters, and our expectations of writing styles'. Further, they implored us to ask these questions of ourselves: How open

are the tourism and hospitality academic communities to critical and alternative perspectives? How many supervisors would encourage their students to embrace Fifth Moment qualitative projects, let alone critical, reflexive or postmodern Eighth Moment studies that may be written in a first-person tone? Further, how open would research committees and PhD examiners be to these approaches? As Denzin and Lincoln (2005) have surmised, the challenges to critical (and interpretive, qualitative) approaches to research are many. We are still called journalists or soft-scientists. Our work is dismissed as unscientific, or exploratory, or merely subjective. More concerning, PhD students are often told not to get too caught up in issues of ontology, epistemology and methodology; to just 'get on and get it done'. Because critical approaches to research are not the norm, critical researchers and postgraduate students are continually being called to justify and explain their approach and its assumptions.

These represent some of the constraints and challenges of undertaking critical approaches in tourism and hospitality studies. But it is an exciting, hopeful and inspiring time in which to be doing critical tourism and hospitality research. We see groups like CATH as important in meeting and resisting these challenges, and welcome the further discussion and debate that will be engendered through critical approaches to studying and teaching tourism and hospitality in the 21st century. Rather than wanting to emphasise the negative and the constraints, we essentially view the critical tourism and hospitality movement as one of hope. In finishing, we draw from Ateljevic, Pritchard and Morgan's (2007, p. 3) words in the opening to their *Critical Turn* book:

Our understanding of critical tourism [and hospitality] scholarship is that it is more than simply a way of knowing, an ontology, it is a way of being, a commitment to ... enquiry which is pro-social justice and equality and anti-oppression: it is an academy of hope.

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