

Book Reviews/Comptes rendus

GARTH ALLEN, & FRANK BRENNAN, *Tourism in the New South Africa: Social responsibility and the tourist experience*. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2004, x + 287 p. Index.

Following the fall of apartheid in 1994, the South African government introduced the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) as a means to establish a political and economic vision as the country transitioned out of international sanctions and internal structural exclusion.

The policy emphasized development policies that were democratic and citizen-driven while adhering to conservative economic policies and development strategies. The RDP sketches the broad context from which Garth Allen and Frank Brennan, two research fellows from Plymouth, England, take up their analysis of eco-tourism as a means to development and empowerment. Their research is based on observations, interviews and experiences that occurred during trips to South Africa together and individually beginning in 1994.

The first two chapters of this book provide a detailed context for the emergence of tourism as a post-apartheid industry. Reflecting back on apartheid South Africa, Allen and Brennan provide an in-depth analysis of economic and political issues that have impacted and continue to impact tourism. They take these legacies up at a variety of levels, ranging from considerations of South Africa's involvement with the International Monetary Fund to the tensions resulting from the integration of the provinces of Natal and KwaZulu and their associated tourism boards. Their research is attentive to the ongoing structural consequences of apartheid such as poor infrastructure, the absence of an internal transportation system and service levels that do not meet Western standards. They also consider the more recent emergence of violence in South Africa as it is implicated in the development of tourism.

Allen and Brennan identify three particular eco-tourism ventures in KwaZulu-Natal, a poor province with a wealth of natural scenery that make it an ideal site for eco-tourism projects linked to community development. The authors focus on three projects in particular – Kosi Bay, Phinda Nature Reserve, and St. Lucia Wetlands – to highlight some of the problems that emerge from efforts to use conservation as a means to reconstruction. They find that all three of these projects are haunted by apartheid practices of relocation and the exclusion of local Blacks from decision-making processes. Conservationist movements continue to be primarily white in composition and in the interests they reflect, interests which are often at

odds to Blacks living in local communities. For instance, in Phinda the fencing of land to protect game created physical barriers to everyday materials such as herbs and firewood, as well as access to the graves of ancestors. Moreover, in St. Lucia, local Black communities were left out of decision-making and when they were included, these communities were assumed to have coherent, common goals – an unreasonable and inaccurate assumption. Overall, Allen and Brennan are doubtful about the potential of eco-tourism as a means to both develop and empower previously excluded communities because of unequal power distribution, differing goals and economic inefficiency.

In the second half of the book, Allen and Brennan move their empirical analysis of tourism into a theoretical framework, arguing that, as a body of literature, tourism studies too frequently fails to draw such connections. As they attempt to bring their earlier analyses into conversation with liberal philosophy, the writing becomes confusing, and the connections between the theory they draw on and their empirical research, or tourism in general, is often unclear. Their theoretical analyses draw heavily on liberal political philosophy. However, this particular orientation raises a significant contradiction. In the first half of the book Allen and Brennan repeatedly call attention to the ongoing exclusions of blacks from the South African economy and civil society (as in the planning and operation of eco-tourism ventures). Yet liberal theory is predicated on inclusion and equality amongst participants in a common civil society. This chasm leaves their theoretical analyses unconvincing.

Moreover, in the second half of the book, the liberal orientation leads the authors to take up tourism as an individual venture. In the conclusion, they claim that the book has stressed “the personal question of virtue on vacation in South Africa” (271). Yet this focus on the individual tourist undermines the patterned inequalities they stressed in the first half of the book. For instance, the authors give the example of a (white) guide who spoke in a derogatory way about the work ethic and sexual practices of the local Tsonga people. The six passengers in the vehicle, the authors included, made no effort to challenge these views. However, Allen and Brennan conclude that they were not socially irresponsible in their lack of response because their inaction reflected tolerance of their host. This conclusion overlooks the relationships between their guide and the Tsonga people, and between tourists and the Tsonga people. It also obscures the ways that apartheid continues, despite its official demise, by concealing the racialized power and presumed normativity of whiteness that are shared by South African whites and visitors from the North (and West). The authors’ theoretical analyses reproduce the exclusions that haunt post-apartheid reconstruction and that are ultimately fatal to eco-tourism as a means to empowerment.

By providing a detailed context to its case study and grappling with complications of development and empowerment, the first half of this book makes a major contribution and is an important read for those interested in development or tourism studies. The second half of the book may appeal

to those interested in liberal theory, though inconsistencies between the tenets of liberal philosophy and the context in which this philosophy is taken up should serve as a cautionary note for such readers.

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