Special Issue in honour of Professor David Harrison (1941-2021)

Editorial

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Raoul Bianchi, Richard Sharpley and Hazel Andrews

Editorial

David Harrison was a major intellectual figure in tourism studies whose work as a scholar, writer and educator made an enormous contribution to the sociology and anthropology of tourism and the political economy of tourism development. His legacy of published work is brought together in his final book, published only this year (Harrison, 2021). His was an unconventional career path compared to many of his academic contemporaries. Aged 16, David left school to work as a bank clerk, then as an HM Customs officer and finally as a teacher in a boys' secondary school in a working class, increasingly diverse borough in West London that was beginning to experience mass immigration from south Asia. These early working experiences undoubtedly helped to shape both his undogmatic intellectual outlook and commitment to giving voice to the people who experience and enact tourism in everyday life, typically through ethnographic fieldwork.

Aged 26, David enrolled at Goldsmith's University of London in 1967 to read sociology. This was followed by a PhD in social anthropology at University College London, under the supervision of the Jamaican anthropologist, M. G. Smith, which he was duly awarded in 1975. Following his postgraduate ethnographic fieldwork in Grande Riviere, Trinidad, an area to which he later returned (Harrison, 1976; Harrison, 2007a), David took up a research fellowship looking at the impacts of tourism in the Caribbean at University College, Swansea funded by what was then the Overseas Development Administration. It was at this point that his attention was increasingly being drawn towards tourism and its relationship to processes of modernization and development, principally in former British colonies and island states in the Caribbean and later in sub-Saharan Africa and the Pacific region.

A particular strength of David's work lay in his ability to combine a keen eye for ethnographic detail with a theoretically inspired analysis of tourism's relationship to the

politics of development. This is demonstrated in his study of the packing and selling of 'tradition' by the Swazi monarchy (Harrison, 1992), and later in his fascinating and nuanced examination of the World Heritage nomination process on the former colonial capital of Levuka in Fiji (Harrison, 2004a, 2004b).

Furthermore, contrary to many of the economistic analyses that had been so prevalent up until that point, David was keen not so much to reject numerical-positivistic evaluation of tourism development but, rather, to view the dynamics of tourism development through a social and cultural lens. Having witnessed the birth pangs of modern mass tourism in the Caribbean during the 1970s and 1980s, one of David's most significant contributions to tourism development thinking has been to interrogate the claims of modernization and dependency theory, drawing on critiques already developed in his first book, *The Sociology of Modernization and Development*, published in 1988. Although modernization theory had fallen out of fashion by this time, he argued that 'a modernisation orientation' had persisted as a the 'default mode of thinking for policy-makers throughout the world' and had taken on a new lease of life under the framework of neoliberal globalisation. Equally however, David had little time for the generalizing abstractions of dependency and underdevelopment theories which, he argued in a typically eloquent turn of phrase, 'were increasingly found to be empirically invalid, theoretically inadequate and politically ineffective (Harrison, 2015: 57).

While David's theoretical perspective and legacy may be hard to pin down, he brought an immense intellectual pedigree to the field of tourism studies, as evidenced by the large volumes of heavily annotated classics of the anthropological and sociological canon that graced his bookshelves. His approach can perhaps best be characterised as a 'no-nonsense approach rooted in empirical research leading to realistic theoretical models' (Yelvington, 2020: 76). David was a pluralist scholar in the best tradition of open, heterodox scholarship who brought an immense intellectual pedigree, honed by 23 years at the University of Sussex, to bear upon the study of tourism. Although he was reluctant to pin his theoretical colours to any one mast, most prominent amongst the various influences on his thinking was the work of sociologist Max Weber in situating social actors at the centre of his work on development and institutional change. This can also be seen in his writings on heritage and culture, discussed by Hyung Yu Park in this issue. In his editorial to a collection of papers presented at a conference to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the World Heritage Convention, David underscores the inter-subjective nature of heritage interpretation, together with the continual ability of local cultures to adapt and change in the face of tourism.

Averse as he was to theoretical abstraction for its own sake, arguably David's approach best resembled Merton's 'middle-range' theory in its close attention to empirical context whilst drawing on social theory and concrete conceptual frameworks through which to analyse tourism. Specifically, David's work is marked by a concern with the forensic observation of local communities and cultures in their interactions with tourism, as well as how they respond to, adapt and help to shape wider economic and political forces (Harrison, 2007b; 2010). David's work, both as a whole and in certain key papers (e.g., Harrison, 2007b; 2015) has also nevertheless made a considerable contribution to the understanding of the systemic processes and logics of tourism development.

As anyone who had ever been taught by David or been at the mercy of his forensic methods of supervision and/or PhD viva questioning can testify, he was also a dedicated teacher and mentor, skilled inquisitor and effortless communicator. His writing too has been noted by many for its lucidity and clarity, rendering accessible many complex ideas and debates. This was never at the expense of academic rigour and forensic analysis. Indeed, David's work achieves an enviable balance between applied and purely theoretical that has not always been the case in tourism studies. Stephen Pratt (2016), a former colleague of David's and contributor to this volume, notes that David's 'balanced approach' was in part influenced by a strict religious upbringing whose dogmatism he rejected. He subsequently developed a healthy scepticism towards similarly dogmatic tendencies in the social sciences which were reminiscent of theological debates.

As befitting such an erudite and gifted scholar, David's interests and work ranged across a wide and fertile terrain including, inter alia, tourism, culture and social change, heritage, sustainable tourism, tourism in small islands, globalization, pro-poor tourism and mass tourism. Underpinning these diverse themes is the consistent concern with thinking through the complex and contradictory relationship between tourism and development. David's work in this respect placed him firmly within the academic debates related to the political economy of tourism development (Harrison, 2010, 2015). However, this was accompanied by a more pragmatic desire to think through the practical challenges of deploying tourism as a development tool and instrument of poverty alleviation (Harrison, 2008, 2009). This led to numerous engagements with industry and consultancy work for which he earned the respect of those traditionally a little wary of academics and their theoretical models. David's life-long commitment to democratising knowledge was borne of his humble origins as well as his unflinching support for extending the opportunities for study and scholarship to the Global South, as testified to in the contribution by Movono and

Scheyvens in this issue. David's dedication to the scholarship without borders was not, however, accompanied by an enthusiasm for post-development thinking and post-colonial critiques of Western social science. Having cut his teeth as a young researcher in the Caribbean in the early aftermath of decolonisation, David of course understood more than most the intertwined legacy of colonialism and certain taken-for-granted Western ways of thinking about the world, as well of course the influence of European radical thought on anticolonial politics. For David, what mattered was good social science, not its provenance. David leaves a rich and varied scholarly as well as institutional legacy. Through his various academic positions[i] together with roles on the editorial boards of leading tourism journals and endeavours, together with other influential tourism social scientists, to place tourism on the agenda of such professional associations as the *Research Committee on International Tourism* of the *International Sociological Association*, the *Development Studies Association* and the *Royal Anthropological Institute*, David made a major contribution to the advancement of the scholarly respectability of tourism studies at a time when a professed interest in studying tourism was either unknown or indeed, at times, ridiculed by fellow social scientists.

Intellectually, David will be remembered for his commitment to academic rigour and scholarship combined with an emphasis on the grounding of ideas in comparative, ethnographic fieldwork. Equally, and not to be confused with the marketization of scholarship and institutional obsessions with 'impact', David was a pragmatist whose support for scholarship and scholars in the Global South was accompanied by an appreciation of the practical applications of tourism development in 'developing' country contexts. Above all else, David will be remembered for his affable charm and scholarly integrity. David was a scholar deeply schooled in the ideas of his time as well as a humble practitioner of his craft, with little time for intellectual conceit and sophistry.

It is with great pleasure, then, that the editors introduce this collection of essays dedicated to David's rich and varied work and some of the major ideas he helped to shape. In the first essay, Richard Sharpley tackles the area of scholarship that consistently preoccupied David's thinking, tourism and its relationship to development theory. In one of his later works, David stated that tourism was likely to continue to be develop through 'some form or other of capitalism' (Harrison 2015: 66). However, while acknowledging David's extensive contribution to our understanding of tourism, development and globalization, Sharpley contends that the validity of development construed as economic growth has been thrown into question by the climate crisis and coronavirus pandemic. If it is to remain relevant, and in the

spirit of David's admonishment to stay close to real world experiences, tourism development theory should engage with emerging ideas around degrowth and post-capitalism.

In the two contributions which follow, Anna Spenceley and Stephen Pratt consider two related aspects of David's work that have now largely been subsumed under the banner of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, that is, pro-poor tourism and sustainable tourism development. Spencely reviews the evolution of the concept of pro-poor tourism in the light of the fact that development agency support for PPT has declined since David had first written about it. Nevertheless, whilst tourism's benefits for poor communities worldwide have not been reflected in development policy to the degree expected, the question of tourism's contribution to poverty reduction has nevertheless been incorporated into the current SDG framework and other 'resilience' and 'regenerative' tourism agendas. Pratt reflects upon David's corrective towards binary thinking around pro-poor tourism and his related scepticism towards the penchant for small-scale local solutions to macro-level problems in an 'era of high mobility within a capitalist and global world'. He goes on to underline David's concern that tourism scholars have in general neglected to engage with and understand the nature of mass tourism, a theme taken up in his recent work with Sharpley (Harrison & Sharpley, 2017). Mass tourism has arguably become omnipresent (pre-pandemic) in an increasingly inter-connected, globalized world, hence the importance of bringing about a sustainable mass tourism rather than simply condemning or somehow escaping from it.

In her deeply personalised account of David's legacy and influence on her own journey as a critical heritage scholar and ethnographic researcher, Hyung Yu Park reflects on David's work in relation to the politics of heritage commodification, and the complex political processes surrounding World Heritage listing (see Harrison, 2004c, 2005). Park explains how this work, together with David's admonishment to question accepted beliefs and paradigmatic worldviews whilst studying for her Masters degree at the then University of North London, led her to amend the focus of her subsequent doctoral research under David's supervision. From a more orthodox evaluation of policy-making procedures in heritage management and tourism development in her native South Korea, her work evolved to explore the role of heritage in shaping national consciousness as well as in providing space for 'reflexive engagement with a shameful past'. David's legacy can thus be strongly felt in Park's work as a critical heritage scholar who continues to develop longitudinal and comparative ethnographic studies in tourism and heritage.

The essay by Apisalome Movono and Regina Scheyvens considers the recent shocks in Fiji caused by the coronavirus pandemic through the lens of David's work on tourism,

power and politics. In their piece, they invoke David's willingness to challenge those in power to critique the political influence of the Fijian tourism industry and the attendant inconsistencies and injustices in Covid-related tourism-policymaking. This contribution brings to the fore David's ability to navigate the delicate balance between pragmatism and criticality. They note that while David fully appreciated the struggles faced by small island states heavily dependent on tourism as their main source of foreign exchange, he was nevertheless deeply attuned to how 'tourism-aligned policies' can marginalise indigenous communities.

In the final essay, Michael Hall brings together the latest thinking on tourism and capitalism. He argues that although many refer to the Anthropocene, or the age of humanity's impact on the natural environment, the current epoch is better understood as one that can be understood as a process of power, profit and production (the capitalocene) in which capitalism is more than an economic system; it drives the exploitation of nature and people in the extraction of the surplus necessary to sustain itself. Hall notes how capitalism has so often been absent in tourism research despite tourism being embedded within and emblematic of capitalism. In acknowledgment of David's contribution to our understanding of tourism and capitalism, he outlines how tourism's contribution to the contemporary environmental crisis, or 'ecocide', is part of a broader crisis of capitalism itself. Hence, reflecting the theme of Sharpley's essay, Hall similarly argues that both tourism and the capitalistic system of which it is part must radically change to bring a halt to contemporary ecocide. In his post-script, Hall provides a fitting tribute to David Harrison's influence on his own thinking noting how 'David's work, together with those of David Harvey and David Held, provided a primary source for my geographical imagination of the way tourism is structured and how this operates over various scales within contemporary globalisation processes.'

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to rage, and humanity hurtles into a turbulent era of climactic instability, the future for tourism has been more uncertain than it has ever been. At a time when tourism academics have been admonished to help the tourism industry to 'build back better' in the wake of the pandemic, we would do well to reflect on David's legacy, and to remind ourselves that we do not have to choose between scholarship and relevance; they are indelibly intertwined.

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[i] From 1996 until 1998 he helped develop a programme in tourism studies at the University of the South Pacific in Fiji. From 1998–2008, he was Professor of Tourism, Culture and Development at London Metropolitan University. In 2008 he returned to Fiji as Professor Tourism and Head of School at the University of the South Pacific where he remained until 2014. Following his return to the UK he was appointed as Professor of Tourism at Middlesex University, and as a Visiting Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Geography, King’s College London, Visiting Professor of Tourism at the University of Surrey and St. Mary’s University College, where he remained until his passing in 2021 .