

Tourism and Crime: key themes

13

Edited by

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Conclusions: Mapping a Research Agenda



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13 Conclusions: Mapping a Research Agenda

David Botterill and Trevor Jones

We began this book with a review of the development of two hitherto relatively separate domains of study that we feel have much to learn from each other. To date, scholarly work on the social phenomena of crime and tourism have largely eschewed cross-disciplinary engagement. The chapters that followed have attempted to bring together the scant research literature that does exist on the subjects of crime and tourism, whilst examining different forms of victimisation against tourists, various types of offending or deviant behaviour by tourists, and responses to crimes by/against tourists by the authorities. Given the paucity of available literature, it is inevitable that these chapters have relied primarily on writing from the distinct perspectives of criminology or tourism studies respectively, depending on the subject expertise of the author. However, many contributing authors have bravely accepted our challenge to attempt to step into each others' world and open up the crime and tourism nexus. To all our contributors we owe a considerable debt of gratitude for beginning what we hope will be an ongoing and productive dialogue between these subject domains. It is our intention in this final chapter to outline briefly the markers of a research agenda for new scholarship in the two subjects and for potential areas of research collaboration.

In the course of the book's production, a compelling argument has emerged that draws our two subject domains closer. It was not our intention, but the structure of the book aids us in making this argument. While Chapters 2 through 8 of the book are grounded in a largely orthodox view of both crime and tourism, in Chapters 9 to 12 we confront the shifting sands inspired by the actuarial turn in criminology and the critical turn in tourism studies. The argument here is that because criminal acts in a tourism context may be, on the criminological hand, only of peripheral interest and, on the tourism hand, best dismissed as externalities and quickly recovered from, the conceptual shift to embrace contemporary preoccupations with 'risk' and the 'fear of crime' shakes up these older certainties in both subjects. This is best demonstrated in Chapters 9 (Hughes), 10 (Jones) and 11 (Selby *et al.*) and we more fully explore the meaning of these shifts or 'turns' below in our discussion of prospects of cross-disciplinary research.

We think that the chapters in this volume suggest a number of areas for potentially fruitful exchange between the two subject areas. We divide these into three main categories: conceptual/theoretical development, new avenues for empirical enquiry, and policy-oriented research. These divisions are analytical rather than absolute, as in practice of course, the categories merge into one another.

Theoretical/conceptual development

As we outlined in Chapter 1, in so far as the study of tourism often involves examination of behaviours and activities that occur in contrasting legal and cultural contexts, Tourism studies inevitably brings out the transient nature of criminology's core concept. Indeed, it illustrates that an important aspect of the 'problem of crime' is the concept of 'crime' itself, which brings together diverse social practices such as trafficking heroine, homicide, credit card fraud, burglary and sexual assault, collapsed into a single category. Considerations of tourism shines light on this conceptual challenge both in exposing the shifting sands of legal definitions of 'crime', as well as in highlighting the limited conceptual gaze with regard to particular forms of socially harmful behaviour. As social constructionist perspectives have highlighted, 'crime' is legally and culturally contingent, and is the outcome of complex social processes involving the 'deviant', 'controllers' and the social audience more generally. The chapters on time share selling (Bott), drug tourism (Shiner) and sex tourism by paedophiles (Montgomery) demonstrate in stark terms the variable nature of crime and deviance relating to variations in cultural mores about what is and is not acceptable, national differences in legal rules about what behaviours require regulation by the criminal law, and contrasting approaches in the enforcement of legal rules.

Although criminology has of course been reflexive about the slippery nature of its core subject matter, it continues to be criticised on grounds of an overly narrow focus on social harms as defined in the criminal law. A consideration of the literature on crimes in relation to tourism quickly demonstrates an important conceptual limitation of such narrow criminological approaches. Using Walklate's (1996) metaphorical classification of types of crime, it is really only 'crimes of the streets' that have formed the focus of scholarly attention, and this by a very few authors who have crossed the disciplinary divide. This work is summarised comprehensively in the chapters of Rob Mawby and Paul Brunt. Both authors noted that the majority of the extant research is based on official statistics or victimisation surveys. Such approaches explore conventional legal categories of crime, and are based on implicitly individualistic assumptions such as intent, culpability, responsibility and guilt. In effect, such conceptualisations of the 'crime problem' define out what in practice are often greater social harms caused by the misdeeds of corporations or governments, or more generally, systemic social harms that arise out of the processes of capitalistic production. Studies of 'white collar crime'

Chapter extract

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