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# 1 Introduction

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## Introduction

Tourism is political in many senses of the word, and the political facets of this industry and area of human practice are multiple. This book follows up on our original work, *Tourism and Political Change*, published in 2010, which was the first book-length work to thematize tourism's relation to political change at different levels in different political and geographical locations. That being said, the content of this book is completely new, building upon the foregoing edition, rather than recapitulating it.

Tourism enters the realm of global politics by virtue of the increasingly global character of tourism patterns and tourism-related enterprises. As the world's largest industry, as proclaimed by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), tourism generated US\$ 1.5 trillion in revenue worldwide in 2015, and tourism arrivals had continued their long upward trend to reach 1.184 billion. This number is projected to reach 1.8 billion arrivals by 2030 (<http://www2.unwto.org/content/why-tourism>). It is thus apparent that tourism is a significant or even pivotal economic sector for countries at all levels of development and in all geographical regions of the world. This economic significance is in and of itself one avenue through which tourism affects political relations and policies. However, this is just one facet of the political implications of this sector. Tourism is a context within which nations and peoples come into contact, with many political dimensions, and with relevance at all levels of governance and policy. Just as tourism is impacted by global economic and political trends and international relations, it also plays an important role in international diplomatic relations. Tourism is also inescapably implicated in national, regional and local politics, and is enmeshed in the micro-politics of the destination.

Aside from its clear relevance within the official politics of governance and policy, tourism is, to an ever greater extent, affected by political action and activism, as it is increasingly approached as a context within which targeted action can affect political and economic change. For example, tourism has been used as a tool to help bring about political discussions, to increase pressure for fair trade and to reduce poverty. Boycotts of travel to nations with repressive governments have put pressure on these regimes to change their ways. The 2015 democratic elections in Myanmar after decades of military rule, attest to the effectiveness of such measures, as discussed in Chapter 9 of this book.

As tourism becomes increasingly politicized, the political milieu within which it must operate is also becoming increasingly complex and some might say unpredictable. The waning years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> have been characterised by the formation of new nation states through the fragmentation of erstwhile countries (or, in the cases of Vietnam, Germany and Yemen, the fusing of two formerly divided countries or pseudo-states), with over 30 new countries having been formed since 1990. Many formerly Communist nations, including Yugoslavia, East Germany and Czechoslovakia ceased to exist, as did the Soviet Union, one of the two world superpowers for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but did not survive to see that century's end. Nations such as Somalia and Sudan lost parts of their territories through the secession of breakaway provinces, while the hotly contested Scottish independence referendum of 2014 is indicative of the many separatist movements that could lead to the splitting of other countries in the coming years, either through the 'civilized' political channels through which the Quebec independence movement is trying, or through more violent means, such as the 2014 declaration of independence of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine after their occupation by Russian troops. As Communist countries in Eastern Europe fell, some of those in East Asia (with the exception of hard-line North Korea) have adopted policies of opening-up and adaptation, to come to terms with market economies and the changing vagaries of the global political landscape.

While these events and trends are national and often global in scale and implications, their impact is also felt keenly at the level of individual communities in these countries or – on the topic of this book – at individual tourism destinations. The interface between global culture and local societies is characterised by many different narratives, such as former colonies' struggle to define a postcolonial political identity, new political alliances and rivalries as a result of shifting economic and political fortunes and affiliations of countries, and the ascent of violent fanaticism to the global political stage.

In the introduction of the previous edition, we remarked upon the rush of nations to join the European Union, a trend which now threatens to reverse itself. The surprise success of the 'Brexit' referendum for Great Britain's exit from the European Union has given support and momentum to similar sympathies in other EU member nations, raising the possibility of an eroding-away of the (largely Western European) original members of the Union, as a counter-movement to (some may say partially as a consequence of) its eastward expansion of recent decades.

## Academic context

As remarked in the previous edition, the interrelation between tourism and politics is a relatively new topic, within which the publication of Linda Richter's seminal book *The Politics of Tourism in Asia* (Richter, 1989) was an important initiating moment that has encouraged scholars in the social sciences to take more interest and action in understanding and influencing tourism policy. Her presentation and discussion of the influences on, and effects of, tourism policy in ten Asian countries has been a guiding reference for both editions of our book. Hall's *Tourism and Politics: Policy,*