

Paradigms Revisited

JOHN TRIBE

Keith Hollinshead's article *The Shift to Constructivism in Social Inquiry* develops some of the themes explored in the first of these two special issues of *Tourism Recreation Research* (Vol. 30, No.2, 2005) on the subject of research methods and approaches and presents a timely review of the paradigms debate. It continues a strand of work that he has been developing over a number of years and offers a useful perspective which surfaces the perspectives and qualities of the other articles. Hollinshead argues that the widening of research options in human inquiry is particularly significant for the issues confronted by *Tourism Studies* – particularly those that involve 'local and highly-contextualized investigations' and where 'multiple truths (i.e., worldviews) contend against each other.' He reveals and explains ten broad shifts which are representative of a turn towards constructivist / interpretivist thought and practice referencing tourism researchers. However, whilst celebrating and calibrating the benefits of constructivist approaches, Hollinshead warns that it is important that those operating under its banner understand the importance of maintaining a vigil of self-critique in order to better develop and establish its credentials.

A key challenge for constructivist researchers is to responds to one of hooks' (1990) challenges and to adequately and faithfully represent the voices of those groups which researchers would seek to understand and speak for. Whilst this task of faithful representation may seem a straightforward case of ensuring the technical quality of the research method used, as hooks has so eloquently warned us there are also power-political, situational and philosophical issues at work and it is the invisibility of these factors that often frustrate the best efforts of the researcher to represent the true voice of the researched. Three of the papers that follow offer particular insights into this problem.

Sue Beeton is clearly conscious of operating in a world of multi-truths and uneven power relations. In her article *From Theory to Practice: Participant Interpretation of Research Results* Beeton discusses how the practical application of theoretical research can result in a modification of the theory. Part of her thesis is that those being studied (the community)

must have a sense of ownership, contribution and involvement in the study and its outcomes. Beeton also recounts the numerous practical problems that are encountered and how these contribute to our understanding of the complexities of community-based research. Similar considerations are central to Tracey Firth's article titled *The Methodological and Practical Issues of Conducting Tourism Research into Aboriginal Communities: The Manyallaluk Experience*. Firth discusses the complexities and perplexities of conducting research within an Aboriginal community setting. Her objective is to increase the awareness of other researchers who venture into similar research territories and spaces with particular reference to the key areas of power and control, truth and culture. Sheena Westwood, Nigel Morgan and Annette Pritchard offer a paper titled *Situation, Participation and Reflexivity in Tourism Research: Furthering interpretive approaches to tourism enquiry*. Their paper provides strong support for Hollinshead's arguments. Its focus is on the relationship between the researcher and the researched and the paper foregrounds the situatedness of the former. They advocate the development of research methodologies which encourage greater participant involvement and researcher reflexivity and emphasise the need to create intellectual spaces where such approaches are fostered. On an applied note they observe that such approaches can offer unique insights into the meanings ascribed by consumers to tourism experiences, practices and performances.

Situatedness is also at the heart of Alan Fyall and Anna Leask's article titled *Researching the Management of Visitor Attractions: International Comparative Study Issues*. The first issue of situatedness they tackle (echoing some of the lines of enquiry embarked upon by Beeton) is that of the practitioner versus the academic, as they note the twin problems of lack of analytical depth and rigour associated with the former. (Interestingly this takes us back to hooks' point about representation). The second issue of situatedness tackled by Fyall and Leask is that of geographical location and here the authors offer a synthesis of methodological issues relevant to researchers wishing to research the management of visitor attractions in different countries around the world. Finally Heather Bowen, Margaret Daniels and Linda Ingram present

the case for *Hybrid Analysis in Tourism Research*. Whilst many researchers confine their methods to a single approach, this paper examines a hybrid methodology encompassing quantitative and qualitative methods. This has been discussed in the context of the examination of tourism advertising images. The authors warn that researchers should be particularly diligent when applying multiple methods. Taking two research approaches have been commonly used to study tourism images, namely content analysis and semiotic analysis, they explain how these methodologies can be used in combination to provide a more thorough analysis than either method can offer alone.

The theme of 'entanglements' permeated the first of these two special issues on research and readers are referred back to that issue to pursue the interesting entanglements between the articles across the two issues particularly on issues of situatedness, representation, content analysis and semiotics.

References

hooks, B. (1990). *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*. Toronto. Between the Lines Press.

John Tribe
Professor of Tourism