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On the Relevance of Travel Journalism: An Introduction

Folker Hanusch and Elfriede Fürsich

Not many people will be instantly familiar with British woman Dale Sheppard-Floyd, but – at least symbolically – she represents a significant milestone in the development of travel and tourism. In fact, the milestone was so significant that the United Nations World Tourism Organization booked Madrid’s venerable Museo del Prado to announce to the world’s media her visit to Spain on 13 December 2012. For Ms Sheppard-Floyd’s arrival for a three-day trip meant that more than one billion times in that year, someone had crossed a border as a tourist. An astounding number, considering that, in 1950, there had been only 25 million tourist arrivals worldwide, and even only two decades previously – in 1990 – the number had been less than half at 435 million arrivals (World Tourism Organization, 2012a, 2012b). While people have traveled for pleasure for millennia (Towner, 1995), tourism really came into its own with the expansion of the middle classes in the 19th and 20th century, and today it is considered the world’s largest business sector, with unprecedented numbers of people venturing outside of their immediate environments to explore the world around them. In 2012, travel and tourism’s total contribution to the world economy amounted to a staggering $6.6 trillion, or 9 per cent of GDP (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2013). More than 260 million jobs were generated by it worldwide, which equates to one in every 11 jobs across the globe. While there were some hiccups during the Global Financial Crisis, growth in 2012 was stronger than in other industries, such as manufacturing, financial services and retail (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2013).

The phenomenal rise of tourism, particularly during the past 50 years, has led to a concurrent interest from scholars, in particular in the growing
number of tourism and travel studies programs at universities. Media and journalism play an immensely important role in communicating destinations to potential tourists. Aside from friends’ recommendations, much of the information that travelers receive is through general media coverage, as well as more specific travel information in print, broadcast, or, increasingly, online. Yet, the role that media and journalism play in ascribing meaning to tourism and producing tourist destinations has only recently garnered the attention from scholars around the world. 

One reason for this lies in media scholars’ traditional inclination to focus on hard news journalism, rather than its softer varieties. This is slightly curious, as many commentators have identified a shift in journalistic output towards these softer types, in particular the area of lifestyle journalism, which has experienced a drastic rise over the past few decades (Hanusch, 2012a). International news reporting, in particular, appears to have experienced a decline in its authority and the amount reported by mainstream media, which have corresponded with a rise of non-fiction entertainment such as travel content as a global media genre (Fürsich, 2003).

Invariably, travel journalism has received ‘flak’ from the broader journalism and communication research community for it is clearly a market-driven type of journalism. Thus, travel journalism is still widely regarded as a ‘frivolous topic’ for research, even more than ten years after Fürsich and Kavoori (2001) noted this positioning towards the field. The general view is often that anyone can go on holidays, and anyone can write about them. As the US travel journalist Thomas Swick (1997, p. 424) has pointed out, ‘of the special-section editors at a newspaper – travel, fashion, food, home and garden – only [travel] occupied a position that is viewed as requiring no particular expertise’. Swick also argues the field has been seen as one in which anyone can work: ‘Not only do most people travel, most people write postcards when they do: ergo, most anyone can be a travel editor’ (1997, p. 424). And this lack of esteem continues despite travel information in the media being cited as an increasingly important source of information for tourists, at least in the early stages when tourists form their motivation for visiting a destination (Nielsen, 2001, pp. 126–29).

The general reluctance among journalism and media researchers to expand into the softer types of journalism has slowly given way to a sense of acceptance, however. Over the past decade, research in travel journalism has reached a critical mass, with a number of scholars engaging with the production, content and reception of travel journalism and travel media. A similar trend has taken place in other fields.
Anthropology, cultural geography, sociology and sociolinguistics, along with the emerging field of critical tourism studies, have interrogated the social, cultural and discursive dimensions of tourism practice (see for example, Burns and Novelli, 2009; Graburn and Barthel-Bouchier, 2001; Jaworski and Pritchard, 2005; Scott and Selwyn, 2010; Thurlow and Jaworski, 2010; Urry and Larsen, 2011). It is precisely the significance of leisure in contemporary society that makes the study of tourism and of travel journalism such a fertile field for research.

This growth in academic attention to the field was the catalyst for the production of this book. Having followed the development of the field over the past 10 to 15 years, we decided that it was time to take stock of what we know about travel journalism, critically examine our existing approaches and open up avenues for future research. For the first time, then, this collection will provide a comprehensive introduction to the field of travel journalism studies.

The amount and variety of travel and tourism as media content has grown along with the rise of digital technologies, the increasing commercialization of media output and the fragmentation of audiences. Besides specialized travel magazines, newspapers produce ever-larger travel sections, and entire cable and satellite television channels are devoted to travel and tourism. Moreover, the Internet now plays a central role in the media discourse on travel. This volume explores a wide variety of media and types of journalism from a range of cultural contexts, and pays special attention to the recent developments in professional practice.

**Significance of travel journalism**

A number of reasons support the argument for a closer scholarly engagement with travel journalism.

**Boom of the tourism industry**

As mentioned above, tourism has become a significant global economic force. Whereas most traveling still takes place within the borders of the home nation, for an increasing number of people international travel is no longer exceptional. The statistics on international arrivals and receipts mirror that development. In 1956, when the World Travel Organization started publishing statistics, worldwide international arrivals were estimated to be 50 million, with international tourism receipts of about $4 billion. Within 40 years, in 1996, arrivals had increased to 594 million with receipts of $423 billion (Waters, 1997). By 2012, these
numbers have risen even more to 1.04 billion international travelers and $1.08 trillion in receipts (World Tourism Organization, 2013).

Whereas the United States, Spain and France are still the top earners in the international tourist business, China now ranks as number 4 of international receipts. Overall, the traditional tourism countries are losing market share to periphery countries and emerging economies. For example, the strongest growth rates were experienced in Southeast Asia (plus 10 per cent) and Eastern Europe (plus 7 per cent). The sector is projected to expand at 4 per cent annually in the long-term (World Tourism Organization, 2013).

Tourism as an instrument of economic policy
Countries rely to a different degree on tourism as a major employer and source of Gross National Product. Many developing countries and emerging economies hope to make tourism – as a presumably ‘clean industry’ – one of the main sectors of their economy. But Western countries such as Austria or Spain also depend on tourism as important revenue and employment sources for their country’s economy.

Overall, increasing automatization in Western countries and the service-oriented information economies have steadily decreased the average weekly and annual working hours during the past 50 years. This has led to the development of leisure societies where tourism is no longer an activity of elites (e.g., Urry, 1990). Moreover, tourism is no longer practiced only within the Global North or from ‘the West to the rest’. The end of the Cold War changed the restrictions on travel in many former communist countries and created a whole new patronage of travelers. The economic success of many emerging economies has expanded the upper middle class in these countries, resulting in more people who value the experiences of foreign travel and have the extra money to spend on travel. For example, China has been the largest travel market for outbound travel since 2012 (World Tourism Organization, 2014). Thus, the changing geopolitical and economic situation in many parts of the world has brought new constituencies to an already booming travel industry.

In addition, during the past decade tourism development has become a much-championed instrument used by economic policy makers across the world to push for a creative economy and an anticipated rise in jobs in the so-called ‘creative class’ (Florida, 2012). As critics (e.g., Flew, 2012, pp. 159–82; Ross, 2009, pp. 15–52) explain, cities and regions across the world, especially in the post-industrial Global North, compete against each other in an intensive struggle for investments, innovation and
sustainable economic development. To attract much-sought after talent, political leaders use tourism strategies (including the gentrification of de-industrialized spaces or events marketing) to create a positive image of their cities as destinations to visit and to live in.

Travel journalism as an important site for international communication research

Paralleling the growth of tourism as a global industry has been the exponential growth of travel journalism. In addition to the traditional travel section in most major national and regional dailies, a large number of general travel magazines are published, along with a prodigious number of specialized travel publications dealing with interests as diverse as rock climbing or cruise vacations. The broadcast media offer specialized travel programs and celebrity travel shows, and a number of countries have entire cable channels devoted to the subject. The Internet is another highly successful outlet for travel-related information. Travel sites of online services and travel-related webpages are among the most accessed websites on the Internet. An online survey by the travel website TripAdvisor (2013) shows just how important travel review websites have become. Around two-thirds (69 per cent) of travelers used these sites in their planning, while only 30 per cent used magazines and brochures. Further, 93 per cent of respondents said their booking decisions had been impacted by online reviews, and 51 per cent said they had written a review of an accommodation themselves after a trip.

The expansion of international tourism has affected the media industry in two ways. First, affluent groups from an increasing number of countries are traveling for pleasure or business. This development generates audience interest for travel-related journalism and information as a media topic. Potential travelers will be interested in this kind of journalism for advice and entertainment. Moreover, the growing global ‘middle-class’ will understand travel, especially international travel, as a desirable private status goal while using mass-mediated travel as ersatz experience as long as they cannot afford actual trips. Second, the tourist industry has generated a larger market for travel advertising and public relations, looking especially for media outlets that promise a targeted and receptive audience. These interrelated trends are exemplified in this book by Jiannu Bao (Chapter 8) who studied the exponential growth of the Chinese travel media market. These developments continue to stimulate a growing market for specialized travel journalism on a global scale.
The increased prominence of travel journalism has relevance for media scholars. This is especially evident when we consider how travel journalism functions much like international news to provide both information and cultural frames for ‘others’. International communication research has traditionally focused either on the spread of news and entertainment or on advertising in a global market (e.g., Reeves, 1993). When looking at the way national media represent foreigners and foreign cultures, studies tend to analyze international news content in newspapers or on television. However, audience interest in ‘hard’ international news is waning while media representations of ‘others’ remain decisive factors in this era of globalization. Therefore, a research agenda of international communication studies can gain from evaluating other media genres. Examining travel journalism is an important strategy for analyzing the dynamics of globalization. Thus, instead of criticizing travel journalism as trivial cultural celebration we can ask what discourse is created within media representations of travel. This approach allows us to interrogate the cultural and ideological assumptions upon which such constructs are based.

**Defining travel journalism**

In order to frame the discussions in this book, as well as in the wider field, it is, of course, important to define what exactly we mean by the term ‘travel journalism’. Often, the terms ‘travel writing’ or ‘travel literature’ on the one hand, and ‘travel journalism’ on the other, are used interchangeably, leading to problems of differentiating between the two. It is important to draw a distinction, however, mainly because the term ‘journalism’ for most people invokes certain norms and ideals. And indeed there are often different standards, in that travel writing more generally allows the inclusion of fictional elements and other literary license that would not be accepted in traditional news media. This has implications for research approaches, too. The literary studies approach often employed for the analysis of semi-fictional accounts of travel, for example by Paul Theroux or Bill Bryson, cannot convincingly explain the unique economic and public situation of journalistic work. Instead, it is travel journalism’s position bound to professional ideas of journalism in its representation of distant places and people that makes it such a distinctive site for research. An additional complication is that quite regularly travel writers alternate between producing travel books and writing for other print or online media, blurring the boundaries for audiences.
Perhaps it is important first to clarify what we mean by the term journalism. Zelizer (2004, p. 3) highlights five definitional sets through which journalism can be viewed: ‘as professionalism, as an institution, as a text, as people, and as a set of practices’. Schudson (2003, p. 11) adopts a functional definition and writes that ‘journalism is the business or practice of producing and disseminating information about contemporary affairs of general public interest and importance’. While he warns about normative definitions of journalism, and acknowledges that there are other types of journalistic practice, Schudson nevertheless focuses on journalism that relates to political affairs, because it is ‘that part of journalism that makes the strongest claim to public importance’ (2003, p. 15). As we have pointed out, this relatively narrow focus on journalism’s relationship with politics surrounds much of the existing academic work in the discipline. As a result, journalism that occurs outside the normative ideal has ‘become denigrated, relativized, and reduced in value alongside aspirations for something better’ (Zelizer, 2011, p. 9).

However, despite the abundance of normative definitions of journalism, there are also more straightforward explanations. For example, McNair (1998, p. 9) sees journalism as ‘an account of the existing real world as appropriated by the journalist and processed in accordance with the particular requirements of the journalistic medium through which it will be disseminated to some section of the public’. Such an inclusive definition does not judge or privilege one kind over the other. The emphasis on the ‘existing real world’ is an important marker when referring to journalism, in order to differentiate it from fictional accounts.

Thus, we argue that while some travel writing can be regarded as travel journalism, the latter is more closely connected to the professional notions around fact, accuracy, truthfulness and ethical conduct of journalism. The important criterion of distinction here is in Fürsich and Kavoori’s (2001) original definition, based on Hartley’s (1996) notion of journalism as a textual system:

The most important textual feature of journalism is the fact that it counts as true. The most important component of its system is the creation of readers as publics, and the connection of these readerships to other systems, such as those of politics, economics, and social control. (Hartley, 1996, p. 35, emphasis in original)

The notion of journalism’s truth claim is central to differentiating between travel journalism – bound by journalistic notions of reporting
on the real – and travel writing, which may include fictional elements. Further, it is important that the definition is able to accommodate work for any medium, be it newspaper travel sections, travel magazines, television travel shows or travel websites. Travel writing, by virtue of its very use of the term ‘writing’ itself, is still bound to the written form in contrast to the increasingly common multimedia practice of travel journalism. In fact, as some of the chapters in this book note, travel journalism is increasingly being conducted online, linking new creators and publics to its output.

The special exigencies of travel journalism mean that travel journalists are likely to be a much more heterogeneous group than news journalists. For instance, there is a very large component of freelancers who work in the industry, many of whom are organized in professional societies such as the Society of American Travel Writers, the North American Travel Journalists Association or the British Guild of Travel Writers. In addition, most media rely on regular news journalists and freelancers to contribute travel stories. Those who produce travel journalism are thus not always ‘experts’ in the field, which may have some impact on the content they produce.

The biggest challenge for travel journalism as a profession is the increasing number of amateur writers who generate travel information online. This is a similar situation to the one that mainstream news journalism finds itself in (Bruns, 2005). As several chapters in this book highlight, there is a wide spectrum of engagement from non-professional writers in travel journalism. While some input is limited to a few lines of review on TripAdvisor or a few pictures on Flickr, other work is produced by influential travel bloggers who often create written and visual content for various traditional media as well. This development has led to a paradoxical situation: While new technologies have made it easier than ever for someone to enter the field and produce travel content for a large audience, the abundance of voices has made it more difficult than ever to actually make a living as a travel journalist. While it may be tempting to dissociate all types of amateur or citizen journalism on travel as a poor copy of ‘real’ travel journalism, the actual variety, reach, and impact of these offers warrants the inclusion of amateur efforts in definitions of journalism. Whereas a professional journalism background, or the ability to make a living as a journalist are no longer discerning factors, in this book we do concentrate on journalistic work that is done with the expectation of income at a reasonable time. This decision allows us to structure the field and separate from it shorter contributions by users who post only once in a while.
Dimensions of travel journalism

When examining the existing studies on travel journalism we can discern four important aspects, or dimensions, that can further help to define the term, and the field more broadly.

The representation of foreign cultures

The most dominant concern of scholars studying travel journalism so far has been its role in representing other cultures and nations. The main purpose of travel journalism is to represent the Other. Based in the cultural studies tradition (e.g., Fürsich, 2002) and critical tourism studies (e.g., Santos, 2004), these studies have focused predominantly on the content of travel journalism. Often these studies have demonstrated that travel journalism presents a friendly and celebratory, albeit exoticizing and stereotypical discourse of the Other. Moreover, from studies in the field of marketing in tourism we do know that news media reports can influence the images that tourists have of a destination. Beerli and Martín (2004), for example, found that organic (such as friends) and autonomous sources (such as independent media reports) significantly influenced some aspects of the destination image of tourists in Lanzarote. In a survey of tourists’ images of Tibet, Mercille (2005) also discovered a relatively strong influence of mass media images on what tourists expected when they visited the country for the first time.

The ethics of travel journalism

A second dimension that has attracted much discussion relates to travel journalism’s tacit allegiance to both advertising and the travel industry. In fact, travel journalism is a highly charged discourse beleaguered by public relations efforts of the private travel industry and by government-sponsored tourism departments (Hanusch, 2012c). In addition to the public relations saturation, travel journalism often exists in symbiotic relationship with advertising. Travel is mostly covered in special sections of newspapers, in magazines or on television shows, which almost exclusively find their advertisers within the travel industry itself. If anything, the online world of travel information has even intensified the collaborations between the tourism industry and professional and amateur journalists as new forms of sponsorship and linking take hold. All these practices place many travel journalists in a difficult position between major interest groups.

Traveling to, and reporting from, distant places is an expensive exercise, and most news organizations are unable to pay for all the travel
experiences about which they publish stories. This is even more the case in the current economically precarious environment for news media, which has led to the decrease in foreign news reporting in the first place. Few academic studies have investigated the relationship between travel industry and journalists systematically – even though it has been a dominant talking point in practitioner reports about the constraints of travel journalism. The professional attitude is also not always as stringent as in news departments. Most travel journalists realize that free travel or accommodation is necessary for them to do their job, but they believe their editorial output is not necessarily influenced by this as much as some might imagine (Hanusch, 2012b, 2012c). US travel journalist Elizabeth Austin confirms that ‘the writers of most junket-based pieces generally sing the praises of their hosts’ accommodations, let’s face it: Travel publications celebrate travel’ (1999, p. 10). Yet she argues that stories that have been paid for by the publishers themselves may even be more biased. After all, the publisher wants an outcome for their expense – potentially leading an author to portray a destination or experience more positively than it was, making it a better story in order to justify the trip. Nevertheless, the issue of disclosure is often debated. Interestingly, an analysis of newspaper travel sections has found that articles which carried a disclosure note actually contained more in-text advertising (i.e. overly positive coverage of a travel provider) than those which did not (Hill-James, 2006).

Travel journalism’s market and consumer orientation

A third area that differentiates travel journalism from most hard news journalism is its market orientation. As a type of lifestyle journalism most travel journalism considers audiences unashamedly as consumers, rather than citizens, even though that does not mean some travel journalists do not also try to be critical in their reporting. Hanitzsch (2007) differentiates between journalism in the public interest and journalism that addresses audiences as consumers, which gives them ‘what they want’ and places high emphasis on entertainment. Typical travel journalism culture would be expected to be ranked as high market orientation according to Hanitzsch’s (2007, p. 375) definitions, as its aim is the ‘blending of information with advice and guidance as well as with entertainment and relaxation’. Indeed, this was found in a study of Australian travel journalists, which noted that they primarily identified with roles that relate to the discovery of new and unique travel experiences and an aim to provide useful, interesting and entertaining information (Hanusch, 2012b). They thus subscribe to a service
function, in line with a traditional understanding of lifestyle journalism that provides ‘news you can use’, as well as a commercial orientation in the vein of ‘soft news’. An interesting aspect in this regard is that most newspapers publish genuine news about the tourism industry in their business sections, where stories are produced by dedicated business journalists, not travel journalists – a distinction which may allow for a more narrow definition of what constitutes a travel journalist.

Motivational aspects of travel journalism

Another dimension of travel journalism is the way in which travel journalists are motivated, that is, how they engage with their audiences as prospective travelers. Fürsich (2002) differentiates between three types of tourism coverage, ranging from uncritical celebrations of travel to critical perspectives on actual trips to reports that problematize tourism and the industry more generally. By engaging with tourism in these different ways, the media help construct differing ideal types of tourists. Such work is grounded in Urry’s (1990, 1995) seminal work on the sociology of tourism, which examines the multitude of tourists’ motivations for and behavior during travel. Urry popularized the notion of post-tourists, who experience a multitude of meanings on their trips, rather than existing structural typologies developed by tourism researchers such as Cohen (1979), Plog (2001), or Smith (1989; Smith and Brent, 2001). Motivation is an important dimension, because it allows us to link concepts in journalism scholarship on what constitutes journalism with tourism studies’ notions of what tourists expect.

Following this brief review of what we consider the four key dimensions of travel journalism, coupled with the earlier explication of definitions of journalism and what separates travel journalism from travel writing, we can now arrive at what we hope to be a reasonably inclusive definition. Hence, we define travel journalism as factual accounts that address audiences as consumers of travel or tourism experiences, by providing information and entertainment, but also critical perspectives. Travel journalism operates within the broader ethical framework of professional journalism, but with specific constraints brought on by the economic environment of its production.

Overview of chapters

Split into four parts, this collection presents work from well-established scholars in the field along with emerging authors in an effort to promote and illustrate the relevance of studying travel journalism.
Covering cultural, social, political and media-related dimensions, the book is interdisciplinary in nature, combining journalism, communication and cultural-critical media studies approaches with tourism and globalization studies and cross-cultural communication approaches. Authors and topics originate from North America, Africa, Europe, Asia and Australia, providing for a truly international perspective on many of the issues concerning travel journalism today.

The 13 chapters that follow this introduction provide a critical discussion of theoretical approaches, in-depth studies on travel journalists, content and impact, as well as ways in which travel journalism can be understood through the lenses of postcolonialism, sustainability and cosmopolitanism. Using qualitative and quantitative methodologies, the contributors deal with a wide range of travel journalistic media, including newspapers, magazines, television and online publications. They identify important trends in, and challenges for, travel journalism research in the intermediate future.

The chapters in this book are organized into four parts, the first of which revolves around strategies that scholars may adopt when studying travel journalism. The aim here is to outline themes along which research may be conducted, as well as to provide some useful categorizations for future research. In Chapter 2, Elfriede Fürsich and Anandam Kavoori update and extend an article, published in 2001, which has become a seminal piece of work for the field as a whole. They retrace their critical framework for studying travel journalism, which is structured by issues of periodization, power and experience, and they assess the progress that has been made in these areas over the past decade. They also introduce a new issue around the notion of mobility, based on recent research in this field. Chapter 3, contributed by Maja Sonne Damkjaer and Anne Marit Waade, provides readers with a typology for characterizing television travel shows. Their analysis of travel series broadcast on Danish television channels from 1988 to 2005 results in a typology of ten different sub-genres, which will be helpful to guide future studies in this field. Chapter 4 combines approaches from tourism studies with journalism studies. Tourism scholars Steve Pan and Cathy Hsu focus on the ways in which travel journalism contributes to the formation of destination images – those mental maps that tourists have of a place. Their analysis focuses on the coverage of the top five destinations for Mainland Chinese and how they were covered in Chinese travel magazines. They argue that travel journalists rarely challenge dominant frames about a foreign destination, and are complicit in furthering stereotypes.
Part II of this book is concerned with the producers of travel journalism, whether they are professionals employed in mainstream media organizations, or amateur and student travel journalists producing content online. In Chapter 5, Bryan Pirolli takes a close look at evolving practices in travel blogs about Paris. The chapter is particularly interested in evaluating the relationship between such blogs and traditional journalistic standards and practices. Going beyond merely the producers, he also explores the interpretations and expectations of those who read these blogs. Chapter 6 also focuses on the way in which the digital environment is affecting travel journalism. Andrew Duffy examines its implications for travel journalism students, who might be pre-conditioned by accessing travel journalism online. He argues that it is important to challenge students to go beyond mere re-telling of experiences to engage meaningfully with host nations. Concentrating on India, Usha Raman and Divya Choudary explore in Chapter 7 the motivations of amateur travel journalists; they look at both travel blogs and newspapers, thus straddling old and new media platforms. A key argument in their analysis is that, while in newspaper travel journalism content tends to be homogenized, the open-endedness of travel blogs and their potential to build communities outside the commercialism of the industry means they offer new and unique ways to practice travel journalism. Chapter 8 explores travel journalism in the context of another populous Asian country that is sending increasing numbers of tourists around the world. Jiannu Bao looks at the evolution of travel journalism in China, and argues that we can discern three stages of this development, which are reflective of the broader evolution of the Chinese media system. She maps in great detail the evolution from a propaganda function to one focused mainly on personal expression and alternative voices.

In Part III, contributors explore aspects of the content of travel journalism more closely. Folker Hanusch’s comparative analysis of travel stories in newspapers from Australia, Britain, Canada and New Zealand, presented in Chapter 9, asks whether the coverage of travel is actually a significant departure from foreign news reporting, in terms of the countries covered. His findings demonstrate that the opportunity for travel journalism to present a more balanced view of the world is generally not taken up, with significant similarities between travel journalism and foreign news. In Chapter 10, Ben Cocking directs his analysis to British travel journalism about safari holidays in Africa. He is concerned especially with the representational strategies that journalists use to report on these experiences, and finds that the commercial environment in which
they are told means that stories are geared towards audiences’ cultural expectations. Thus, travel journalism is unable to break free from clichéd and at times outdated views of the world. Chapter 11, by Christine Buzinde, Eunice Yoo and C. Bjørn Peterson, continues the regional analysis, though this time with a focus on the Middle East. Employing textual analysis, their contribution highlights the visual and verbal discourses about the region as portrayed through the popular television travel program *No Reservations*. They demonstrate that travel journalism can confront audiences with socio-political issues in a way that engages them by strategically involving and empowering local perspectives.

The final part of this book focuses on the politics of travel journalism through a variety of prisms. In Chapter 12, Wiebke Schoon explores how the concept of cosmopolitanization can be used to elucidate travel journalism. This mainly theoretical chapter offers a very useful and concrete framework that operationalizes cosmopolitanism in a way that can be adapted for future content analyses of travel journalism. This is an important departure, as inquiries of cosmopolitanism in the media have tended to concentrate on disaster and crisis reporting, rather than softer types of journalism. Lyn McGaurr extends her work on the role of travel journalism in communicating environmental problems in Chapter 13. Also taking a cosmopolitanist approach, she provides an empirical analysis of travel journalists’ views of their reporting on the environment in the Australian island state of Tasmania. Her analysis demonstrates that while travel journalism can show at times cosmopolitan concern for destinations, it is also still tied very strongly to the market logic of the global tourism industry, making such representations the exceptions rather than the norm. Chapter 14 focuses on a phenomenon that has been explored in tourism studies for only a relatively short amount of time. Brian Creech explores the ways in which travel journalism can mediate dark tourism: travel to sites of disasters or death. He analyzes the reporting of the Tuol Sleng prison in Cambodia, which is now a museum. He argues that travel journalism, while mostly remaining superficial, can connect with audiences to evoke empathy and humanism in different ways from news journalism.

**(Travel) journalism in turbulent times**

The debate continues if travel journalism can present a unique and significant perspective on how we understand the world. While some of the authors in this book find travel journalism reiterating or intensifying the problems of traditional news journalism, others demonstrate
under what conditions this type of journalism can challenge our knowledge or augment our perspectives derived from international news. If anything, the chapters detail that a more balanced understanding of the world’s diversity does not come easily and needs self-reflective and innovative professional strategies. Credibility, transparency and active engagement in close encounters – those are the journalistic ingredients in various chapters that trigger empowering discourse, interrupt problematic representations and offer more than what traditional news journalism can provide.

Yet there are no quick and easy solutions to better journalism. This book then urges travel journalists to push the boundaries of their field, to leave the pack on easy trips organized by tourism public relations agencies. At a time when the media industry is in upheaval and the profession of journalism fears extinction, this task seems daunting. But these troubled times also provide travel journalists with ample opportunities by offering more technological capabilities, media platforms, and narrative options than ever. However, renewal does not just mean looking ahead but may also entail remembering well-established practices of travel journalism. The foreign and (sometimes) travel correspondent Robert D. Kaplan even sees traditional strategies of travel journalists and writers as a model for journalism in general:

> Journalism desperately needs a return to *terrain*, to the kind of first-hand, solitary discovery of local knowledge best associated with old-fashioned travel writing. Travel writing is more important than ever as a means to reveal the vivid reality of places that get lost in the elevator music of 24-hour media reports. (2006, p. 49, emphasis in original)

Travel journalism is a field with unique circumstances but also an area that echoes the trials and tribulations of the media industry overall. This book hopes to show that studying travel journalism does not just help explain a journalistic niche field but can also clarify professional assumptions and practices of other types of journalism. The findings from the fringes can have consequences for the study of all journalism and the media in general. It is about rethinking and revitalizing journalism at a time of crisis.

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