

Introduction:
Maximiliano E. Korstanje's Legacy,
Contributions, and Critical Debates

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This special issue dedicated to the journal is a literary piece I am not accustomed to writing. It reflects my experience as a writer, editor, and researcher in the fields of sociology of tourism for more than 20 years. The text describes my contributions written and generated by AI. Of course, I never intervened in the criticism the AI generated unless by curating incorrect details about my works. The issue covers unexplored points related to terrorism, climate change, epistemology, coloniality, security-safety, and finally education and climate change. At the bottom, the critical debate awakened by my works has been added without editing. I have personally edited and corrected the mistakes or inconsistencies in the text.

Introduction

The present special issue is based on Maximiliano E. Korstanje works representing one of the most distinctive and controversial contributions to contemporary tourism studies. Over the last two decades, Korstanje has challenged conventional understandings of tourism by moving the field beyond its traditional focus on economics, management, and destination development (Korstanje, 2012). Instead, he has positioned tourism as a complex social phenomenon deeply connected with questions of modernity, globalization, mobility, power, fear, hospitality, identity, memory, and inequality (Korstanje & Gowreesunkar, 2024). His scholarship has contributed to the emergence of a more critical sociology of tourism, encouraging researchers to examine not only how tourism operates but also what tourism reveals about contemporary societies.

Korstanje's intellectual legacy is rooted in his attempt to redefine the object of tourism studies. While much tourism research has historically approached tourism as an industry concerned with economic growth, employment generation, and consumer satisfaction, Korstanje argues that such perspectives provide only a limited understanding of the phenomenon. Tourism, in his view, is not simply a market activity but a social

institution that reflects the cultural, political, and historical conditions of the societies in which it develops (Korstanje, 2018). His work therefore seeks to reconnect tourism studies with broader traditions of sociology, anthropology, philosophy, and critical theory (Korstanje & George, 2012).

One of Korstanje's major contributions has been his analysis of tourism as a form of social meaning production. His interpretation of tourism as a rite of passage expands earlier anthropological approaches developed by Arnold van Gennep (1960) and Victor Turner (1969), demonstrating that modern travel continues to perform symbolic functions traditionally associated with rituals. Tourists separate themselves from everyday life, enter a temporary state of liminality, encounter difference, and return with transformed identities. Through this approach, tourism becomes not merely a movement across geographical space but a process of personal and collective transformation.

Another important dimension of Korstanje's legacy concerns his analysis of tourism, terrorism, and security. Through works examining terrorism and tourism, he challenges the conventional assumption that terrorism simply represents an external threat to tourism systems. Instead, he argues that both tourism and terrorism are interconnected within the same global structures of mobility, communication, and symbolic representation (Korstanje & Clayton, 2012). His provocative argument that "tourism is terrorism by other means" has generated significant debate because it suggests that both phenomena operate through visibility, movement, and the symbolic occupation of public spaces. Rather than equating leisure travel with political violence, Korstanje uses this formulation to expose the contradictions of a global system in which mobility can represent both freedom and vulnerability (Korstanje, 2010).

Closely connected to this argument is his contribution to understanding the crisis of hospitality in Western societies. Drawing on philosophical discussions of hospitality, particularly the work of Jacques Derrida, Korstanje argues that globalization and security concerns have transformed the relationship between hosts and strangers. Historically, hospitality represented an ethical obligation toward the outsider; however, modern tourism increasingly operates through commercial exchange, surveillance, and risk management. Airports, hotels, and borders increasingly welcome visitors only after processes of identification and control. In this sense, Korstanje argues that

contemporary hospitality has become conditional rather than unconditional (Korstanje, 2017). Korstanje has also made important contributions to the study of dark tourism and the relationship between tourism, death, and memory. Through the concept of Thana Capitalism, he argues that contemporary capitalism increasingly creates economic value through the management and consumption of insecurity, catastrophe, and mortality (Korstanje, 2017). Dark tourism sites associated with wars, disasters, terrorism, and historical violence reveal how societies transform collective trauma into spaces of education, remembrance, and economic activity. His analysis contributes to broader debates about whether the commercialization of suffering represents preservation, exploitation, or a complex combination of both.

A further aspect of Korstanje's legacy concerns his contribution to tourism epistemology. He challenges the dominance of positivist and managerial approaches by arguing that tourism requires interdisciplinary investigation. His work incorporates sociology, anthropology, political economy, philosophy, and cultural studies to examine tourism as a reflection of broader social structures. In this sense, he contributes to what has been described as the "critical turn" in tourism studies (Bianchi, 2009), which calls for greater attention to issues of inequality, power, ethics, and representation. His Latin American background also provides an important dimension to his scholarship. Korstanje's work contributes to the diversification of tourism knowledge by questioning the assumption that theories developed in the Global North can be universally applied. His analyses of globalization, coloniality, and mobility resonate with broader postcolonial and decolonial critiques that examine how tourism can reproduce historical inequalities between the Global North and Global South. Tourism destinations in developing regions are often represented as spaces of consumption for wealthier travelers, while local communities may have limited control over tourism narratives and economic benefits. Korstanje's work encourages scholars to examine these unequal relationships and reconsider how tourism knowledge itself is produced.

Despite these contributions, Korstanje's scholarship has also received criticism. One of the most frequent critiques concerns the highly theoretical and abstract nature of his arguments. Some scholars argue that concepts such as Thana Capitalism and "tourism as terrorism by other means" are intellectually stimulating but difficult to operationalize empirically. Critics suggest that his interpretations sometimes rely more on

philosophical reflection than on systematic empirical research. Another criticism relates to the possibility of overgeneralization. Some researchers argue that Korstanje's emphasis on insecurity, capitalism, and social contradictions may understate the diversity of tourism experiences across cultures and regions. Tourism is not experienced in the same way by all communities, and some scholars maintain that his analyses could pay greater attention to local agency, resistance, and alternative forms of tourism development. His interpretation of hospitality has also generated debate. While many scholars recognize the increasing securitization of mobility, others argue that hospitality has not disappeared but has transformed into new forms. Community-based tourism, indigenous tourism, solidarity tourism, and grassroots hospitality practices demonstrate that relationships between hosts and guests continue to involve reciprocity and ethical exchange beyond commercial and governmental systems.

Similarly, critics of his approach to tourism and terrorism suggest that comparisons between these phenomena must be handled carefully. Tourism involves voluntary mobility, leisure, and cultural exchange, whereas terrorism involves coercion and violence. While Korstanje's argument is intended as a structural and symbolic critique rather than a literal equivalence, some scholars believe that the formulation risks creating conceptual confusion. Nevertheless, these criticisms also demonstrate the significance of Korstanje's work. His scholarship has generated debate because it challenges established assumptions and encourages tourism researchers to ask broader theoretical questions. His importance does not necessarily lie in providing definitive answers but in opening new areas of inquiry.

Ultimately, Maximiliano E. Korstanje's legacy is his transformation of tourism from a primarily economic field into a critical social science. His contributions to the study of hospitality, terrorism, dark tourism, risk, coloniality, tourism education, and epistemology have expanded the boundaries of tourism research. By emphasizing the contradictions of mobility in contemporary society, he has shown that tourism is simultaneously a practice of freedom and control, encounter and inequality, transformation and commodification. Whether accepted or contested, his work has become an important reference point for scholars seeking to understand tourism as a mirror of the broader social, political, and ethical challenges of the twenty-first century.

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