
The Contribution of Maximiliano E. Korstanje to Tourism and Terrorism Studies (Part II)

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Abstract

This paper critically examines the scholarly contributions of Maximiliano E. Korstanje to the interdisciplinary fields of tourism, terrorism, and security studies. Drawing on his sociological and anthropological approach, it explores his reinterpretation of tourism as a social institution shaped by capitalism, globalization, hospitality, and mobility rather than merely an economic activity. Particular attention is given to his theories of risk perception, the securitization of tourism, and the transformation of hospitality in response to terrorism. The paper also analyses his controversial proposition that *tourism is terrorism by other means*, arguing that both phenomena share a common structural logic rooted in symbolic communication, mobility, and the contradictions of global capitalism. Furthermore, it discusses his contributions to dark tourism through the concepts of commodified memory and **Thana Capitalism**, which explain how death, disaster, and insecurity become incorporated into contemporary tourism economies. Finally, the paper evaluates the influence, originality, and criticisms of Korstanje's work, arguing that his interdisciplinary perspective has significantly broadened debates within tourism studies by linking tourism to wider questions of fear, violence, ethics, and social order.

Key Words: terrorism, tourism, dark tourism, thana capitalism.

Tourism, Terrorism, and the Political Economy of Mobility

Among Maximiliano E. Korstanje's most distinctive contributions is his attempt to reconceptualize the relationship between tourism and terrorism. Rather than treating

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tourism as the innocent victim of terrorist violence, Korstanje argues that both phenomena are products of the same historical conditions that characterize modern capitalism, globalization, and mass mobility. His provocative assertion that "**tourism is terrorism by other means**" is not intended as a literal equivalence between leisure travel and political violence. Instead, it functions as a sociological metaphor that exposes their shared structural logic (Korstanje, 2017a).

For Korstanje, tourism and terrorism are two different forms of symbolic communication operating within the same global system. Tourism promotes images of freedom, cosmopolitanism, consumption, and hospitality, while terrorism communicates through fear, disruption, and spectacular violence. Both depend upon mobility, media visibility, and the circulation of symbolic messages that reach audiences far beyond the immediate site of the event. In this sense, tourism and terrorism become mutually constitutive phenomena rather than independent realities. The relationship becomes particularly evident in the symbolic value of tourist spaces. Airports, hotels, cruise terminals, museums, heritage attractions, festivals, and public squares are not simply infrastructures serving tourists; they represent the openness, prosperity, and interconnectedness of globalization. Consequently, they become attractive targets for terrorist organizations seeking maximum symbolic impact. Terrorism attacks these spaces because they embody the very principles of mobility and hospitality that sustain the contemporary global order.

Korstanje therefore rejects the conventional assumption that terrorism merely interrupts tourism. Instead, he argues that both emerge from the contradictions of global capitalism. Tourism requires increasingly open borders, rapid transportation, digital communication, and international mobility, yet these same processes create new vulnerabilities that terrorism exploits. Thus, terrorism reveals the fragility of the systems upon which tourism depends. This perspective also challenges dominant security paradigms. Rather than viewing security simply as protection against external threats, Korstanje argues that modern societies increasingly organize tourism through surveillance, risk management, biometric control, and intelligence systems. Hospitality becomes conditional upon continuous assessment of potential danger, fundamentally altering the traditional relationship between hosts and guests.

The End of Hospitality in Contemporary Tourism

Hospitality occupies a central position throughout Korstanje's work. Building upon the philosophical writings of Jacques Derrida and anthropological traditions concerning reciprocity and gift exchange, he argues that hospitality historically functioned as a moral institution regulating encounters between strangers. Long before the development of modern tourism, hospitality facilitated commerce, diplomacy, pilgrimage, and peaceful coexistence by establishing ethical obligations between hosts and travellers.

According to Korstanje (2017b), this historical institution has undergone profound transformation within contemporary capitalism. Hospitality has increasingly become commercialized, standardized, and securitized. Hotels, airports, resorts, and tourism destinations continue to welcome visitors, but this welcome is mediated through contracts, surveillance technologies, biometric identification, legal regulations, and risk assessments. The expansion of international terrorism has accelerated this transformation. Following major attacks such as those of September 11, 2001, governments across the world introduced stricter border controls, enhanced airport screening, digital surveillance, and immigration restrictions. While these measures undoubtedly improve aspects of public safety, Korstanje argues that they simultaneously redefine the meaning of hospitality itself.

Guests increasingly become subjects of suspicion before they become recipients of hospitality. Identity verification, behavioural monitoring, biometric passports, facial recognition technologies, and extensive security protocols transform the encounter between host and visitor into one structured by surveillance rather than trust. Consequently, Korstanje argues that contemporary Western societies have entered an era characterized by the end of unconditional hospitality, where openness toward strangers has been replaced by precautionary governance (Korstanje, 2017a). This argument extends beyond tourism management to broader debates concerning migration, citizenship, globalization, and the governance of mobility.

Dark Tourism and the Commodification of Death

Korstanje's contribution to **dark tourism** represents another important dimension of his scholarship. Although numerous researchers have examined tourism associated with sites of death, tragedy, and disaster (Stone, 2006; Sharpley & Stone, 2009), Korstanje argues that dark tourism cannot be adequately understood simply as travel motivated by curiosity or remembrance. Instead, it reflects the broader transformation of death into a cultural and economic commodity within advanced capitalist societies. According to Korstanje, contemporary societies increasingly consume representations of catastrophe through tourism, museums, documentaries, memorials, media coverage, and digital platforms. Terrorist attacks, natural disasters, industrial accidents, pandemics, and wars become incorporated into tourism economies through carefully constructed narratives of memory, resilience, education, and national identity (Korstanje, 2016).

Sites such as Ground Zero in New York, the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial, Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park, Chernobyl, and numerous terrorism memorials around the world illustrate how spaces of collective trauma are transformed into destinations visited by millions of people each year. These places undoubtedly fulfil important educational and commemorative functions, yet Korstanje argues that they also participate in broader economic processes through which suffering becomes marketable. Rather than condemning dark tourism, Korstanje asks a more fundamental sociological question: why have modern societies become increasingly fascinated with consuming death? Drawing upon Freud, Durkheim, and contemporary sociology, he argues that dark tourism enables individuals to confront mortality within socially regulated environments. Visitors encounter death symbolically while simultaneously reaffirming their own survival, security, and membership within a moral community.

However, this process also reveals important contradictions. Memorialization frequently coexists with commercialization. Souvenir shops, guided tours, visitor centres, museums, hotels, restaurants, and tourism marketing transform spaces of tragedy into components of local economies. Consequently, remembrance and consumption become intertwined. For Korstanje, dark tourism therefore illustrates how capitalism appropriates collective suffering without necessarily diminishing its commemorative significance. Death becomes both sacred memory and economic resource.

Thana Capitalism: Fear, Death, and Economic Production

Korstanje develops these arguments further through his concept of **Thana Capitalism**, perhaps his most ambitious theoretical contribution. Borrowing from the Greek concept of *Thanatos*, he argues that contemporary capitalism increasingly generates value through the production, management, and consumption of insecurity. Unlike earlier stages of capitalism that primarily commodified labour and material goods, advanced capitalism increasingly commodifies uncertainty itself. Security industries, terrorism prevention, insurance, disaster recovery, crisis management, surveillance technologies, resilience consulting, and dark tourism all become profitable sectors precisely because societies anticipate future catastrophes (Korstanje, 2017).

Within this framework, fear becomes economically productive rather than merely socially disruptive. The tourism industry provides numerous examples of this process. Destinations invest heavily in security certification, airports introduce increasingly sophisticated screening technologies, governments issue travel advisories, hotels advertise enhanced safety measures, and tourists purchase insurance policies that promise protection against uncertain futures. Security itself becomes a commodity embedded within tourism experiences.

Dark tourism likewise participates in this political economy by transforming collective memories of death into heritage attractions that generate employment, investment, and economic development. Memorial museums, reconstructed disaster sites, and terrorism exhibitions preserve historical memory while simultaneously operating within competitive tourism markets. For Korstanje, these developments reveal the emergence of an economy increasingly organized around catastrophe. Rather than existing outside capitalism, disasters and terrorism become incorporated into new forms of production and consumption.

Risk Perception and Tourism Security

A central empirical contribution of Korstanje's research concerns the concept of **risk perception**. While objective measures of security remain important, he argues that tourists primarily respond to socially constructed perceptions of danger rather than statistical probabilities. Risk perception emerges through interactions between media

reporting, political discourse, cultural narratives, historical memory, institutional trust, and individual experience. Consequently, destinations experiencing isolated but highly publicized terrorist attacks may suffer dramatic declines in visitor numbers despite remaining statistically safer than many competing destinations. Media play an especially significant role within this process. Continuous news coverage, social media circulation, and visual imagery transform isolated acts of violence into global spectacles capable of influencing travel decisions across continents. Terrorism succeeds symbolically because its psychological effects extend far beyond immediate physical destruction. This understanding has practical implications for tourism management. Recovery following terrorist attacks depends not only upon strengthening physical security but also upon rebuilding confidence through effective communication, destination branding, and public trust. Governments and destination management organizations therefore invest heavily in reassurance campaigns designed to reduce perceived risk. Korstanje argues that security has consequently become part of the tourism product itself. Tourists increasingly consume reassurance alongside accommodation, transportation, and leisure experiences. The contemporary tourism industry therefore markets not only pleasure but also psychological certainty.

Contributions to Disaster Studies and Critical Tourism Research

Korstanje has also contributed significantly to disaster studies by challenging conventional understandings of resilience and crisis recovery. Much tourism literature celebrates resilience as the capacity of destinations to recover quickly following disasters or terrorist attacks. Korstanje questions whether this concept sometimes functions ideologically by shifting responsibility away from governments and structural institutions onto local communities and individual businesses. According to his critique, calls for resilience often obscure deeper political, economic, and historical causes of vulnerability. Encouraging communities simply to become more resilient may neglect inequalities in governance, infrastructure, development, and access to resources. Consequently, resilience should not replace critical analyses of the structural conditions that produce disasters and insecurity. His work therefore encourages tourism researchers to move beyond managerial approaches toward broader sociological analyses of power, capitalism, governance, and historical change.

Scholarly Influence and Critical Reception

Korstanje's work has had considerable influence within critical tourism studies, tourism sociology, hospitality research, disaster studies, and tourism security. His interdisciplinary approach has encouraged greater dialogue between sociology,

anthropology, political science, philosophy, and tourism management, expanding the theoretical foundations of the field. His scholarship is particularly valuable because it challenges the dominance of managerial perspectives within tourism research. Rather than asking how destinations can maximize visitor satisfaction or economic growth, Korstanje asks more fundamental questions about the social meaning of tourism, the politics of mobility, the transformation of hospitality, and the role of fear within contemporary capitalism.

At the same time, his work has generated substantial debate. Critics argue that some of his theories are highly abstract and difficult to verify empirically. Concepts such as **"tourism is terrorism by other means"** and **Thana Capitalism** have been criticised for relying heavily on sociological interpretation rather than systematic empirical testing. Others suggest that his analyses occasionally overgeneralize complex global processes or underestimate regional differences in tourism development.

Nevertheless, these criticisms also reflect the originality of his work. His writings deliberately challenge dominant paradigms, encouraging scholars to reconsider assumptions that have long structured tourism research. Whether accepted or contested, his ideas have stimulated important discussions concerning mobility, violence, memory, hospitality, and globalization.

Conclusion

Maximiliano E. Korstanje has established himself as one of the leading critical theorists in contemporary tourism studies by fundamentally redefining the relationship between tourism, terrorism, hospitality, and capitalism. His work moves beyond conventional understandings of tourism as an economic activity, instead portraying it as a social institution embedded within broader systems of power, symbolic communication, and global mobility.

His analysis of terrorism emphasizes its symbolic capacity to reshape perceptions of security and to transform the institutions of hospitality upon which tourism depends. Through the provocative proposition that **tourism is terrorism by other means**, Korstanje invites scholars to recognize that both phenomena arise from the same global

structures of mobility, media spectacle, and capitalist modernity. Rather than existing in opposition, tourism and terrorism become interconnected expressions of a world increasingly organized through movement, consumption, surveillance, and symbolic power. Equally significant are his contributions to the study of dark tourism and Thanatopolitics, which demonstrate how death, disaster, and collective trauma are increasingly incorporated into systems of economic production and cultural consumption. His analyses reveal that memorialization, remembrance, tourism, and commercialization are not separate processes but mutually constitutive dimensions of contemporary society. Although aspects of his scholarship remain controversial, particularly its theoretical orientation and provocative conceptual language, Korstanje has undeniably expanded the intellectual scope of tourism research. His interdisciplinary synthesis of sociology, anthropology, political economy, philosophy, and security studies continues to offer valuable insights into the complex relationships between mobility, fear, hospitality, and globalization. As tourism confronts persistent challenges associated with terrorism, pandemics, geopolitical instability, and environmental crises, his work remains an important framework for understanding the social and political dynamics that shape travel in the twenty-first century.

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