

**Review:** Lukas Breitwieser, *Die Geschichte des Tourismus in Namibia. Eine heterotropische Topologie der Technik*, Basel, Basler Afrika Bibliographien, 2016.

Tourism in Namibia is a field of high political and economic relevance. The numbers of tourists arriving and the levels of international investment in Namibia's tourism sector have grown constantly in recent years.<sup>1</sup> New initiatives in nature conservation, such as the Peace Parks and the mushrooming communal conservancies all over Namibia seem to offer solutions for the protection of wildlife and rural development. These solutions are increasingly based on the assumption that the streams of tourists coming to hunt or go on safari will continue indefinitely. Wildlife, Namibia's most precious asset in this lucrative market, must be protected against poachers – and increasingly this is being done by armed forces. At the same time, new and hitherto lesser known tourism sectors have come into focus, such as health and shopping tourism, mostly for visitors from Angola.

In view of these developments, Lukas Breitwieser's monograph on the history of tourism in Namibia is much needed. As he states himself, there has been surprisingly little historical research into tourism in Namibia, particularly not in

such a broad and overarching framework as in this book. Breitwieser's aim was to provide us with a "gattungsübergreifende[n] Symbiose aus schriftlichen und bildlichen Quellen" (p. 47) in order to allow for a multi-perspective view of the different phases of the Namibian tourism industry between 1920 and 1990 and to critically analyse these phases.

*Die Geschichte des Tourismus in Namibia* starts from a clearly defined viewpoint, namely from a European, particularly German perspective. In his introduction Breitwieser describes his approach to Namibia, as a researcher arriving at Hosea Kutako Airport, discovering Windhoek for the first time and taking a trip to Swakopmund. He describes his reflections, thoughts and feelings during these experiences. This short personal introduction is followed by his central approach to the topic, a thorough and highly interesting overview of (western) theories and academic thinking on tourism. Breitwieser's engagement with the history of tourism in Namibia, particularly through the constant references to the spatiality of tourism and its close links to technological developments is a further contribution to these discourses.

After this opening, the author discusses the history of international (mostly German) tourism to Namibia. He reproduces anecdotes about safari trips through Namibia from the memoirs of early travellers, and describes the preparations and general considerations of the Namibian tourism companies using material from their archives (Chapter 2 and 3). In Chapter 4, Breitwieser gives a comprehensive

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<sup>1</sup> World Travel and Tourism Council, *Travel & Tourism. Economic Impact 2017 Namibia*, <<https://www.wttc.org/-/media/files/reports/economic-impact-research/countries-2017/namibia2017.pdf>> [accessed 19 June, 2017].

review of tourism-related articles in the *South West Africa Annual Magazine* and focuses on the visual aspects of tourism in Namibia, namely on maps and advertisings. The author then examines a number of guidebooks (chapter 5). In these chapters the author delves more deeply into the nature of tourism in Namibia, with many references to how touristic infrastructure – if understood as material dispositive – added to the construction, imagination, consumption and reproduction of Namibian tourism spaces (p. 326).

It is, however, precisely the 'space' and the history in which this tourism happens that remains surprisingly vague in this study. Breitwieser stresses in his introduction that tourism is only defined and its topology only established through individual and social negotiations and appropriation. But after stating that, the book often reverts to a narrow understanding of local and regional social, political and economic histories. For example, Breitwieser claims that for tourism businesses apartheid only meant more administrative costs. Here he completely ignores the many ways in which tourism businesses might also have profited from an apartheid system, be it by availing of cheap labour, by having 'traditionlized spaces' for Africans sealed off, or through the support for the so-called conservation of 'uncivilized tribes'. The fact that the author hardly establishes any links to these developments, histories and politics in Namibia that were not a direct consequence of international tourists coming to Namibia is also reflected in the literature and sources he used. Sadly, there is no reference to any

Namibian or even African scholar. He hardly uses any other contributions from Namibians outside of the archival material of the few white-owned tourism businesses and does not include any interviews.

Lukas Breitwieser's book is a valuable contribution to the theoretical debates on space, technology and tourism. With its focus on Namibia, Breitwieser presents an interesting case study of a region that has become one of the most successful African tourism destinations. Hence the book offers a thorough history of tourism to Namibia. What has yet to be published though is a study which examines the role tourism has played in Namibia's history that engages with tourism as something that happens in Namibia involving Namibians of different backgrounds, embedded within the country's economy, politics and histories.

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