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Making Destinations Come Alive: student created stories of place

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Making Destinations Come Alive: student created stories of place.

Most locations around the world are, to some degree, drawn into the global production of goods, services, and experiences. However, there is also a desire to make sense of global themes at a local level (Salazar, 2010). Thus, one response to globalization has been a renewed interest in connections to place for both locals and tourists.

This presentation draws from a research project at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) and from place based curriculum and literature, to describe student-created one hour walking tours and accompanying postcards as a way of engaging both international and domestic students in the creation of a story of the local landscape for both locals and tourists. Canadian campuses are increasingly internationalized places, due in part to institutional strategies for growth. So why not engage international students and domestic students in the creation of place based tourism products for both local and international guests? Within the context of a 3rd year Community and Cultural Issues class at TRU we explored the questions of "how do we engage tourists in the local landscapes they visit?" "What role do stories play in creating connections to the tourist experience of place?"

Seminal authors such as Edward Relph (1976) suggest that tourists are rarely inclined to develop a "sense of place" in relation to the destinations that they visit because of the superficial nature of their experiences, the short amount of time they spend in one place and the tendency of the tourism industry to present 'Disneyfied' landscapes devoid of deeper meaning (Hinch and Higham, 2004; Bryman, 2004). This perspective fits into a broader discourse of modern day mass tourism as a hallmark of globalization (Jaworski and Pritchard 2005; Clifford, 1997; Salazar, 2010), which also includes commodification of local cultures, landscapes, products and experiences.

Place is always storied and as tourism practitioners and researchers we are in a privileged position of being able to mediate, construct and study narratives of place. A connection to place—for both locals and travelers—has particular relevance to this conference theme and this presentation probably fits best with either Place promotion strategies and techniques: Content creation or Place attachment: Consumer demand for authentic places and experiences.

Ideally this presentation would work well within a 30 minute concurrent session or a round table format with the opportunity to present a brief discussion of this place based assignment before round table discussions take place.

Bio:

Robin Reid is an Assistant Professor in the Tourism Management Department at TRU. Her involvement with TRU's Pedagogy of Place Research Group and TRU's Interculturalizing the Curriculum program provides a background for curriculum development that engages both international and domestic students in places where they work and study. Robin's academic background and teaching experience has guided her research interests in cultural narrative and sense of place in urban, rural and wilderness landscapes. Robin received the TRU 2014 Teaching Excellence Award.