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Title: Proposing LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® Methodology for Tourism Studies: A critical Reflection

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Abstract:

We provide a critical consideration of the creative co-constructive methodological tool, LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® for tourism studies. LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® is a communication tool aimed at developing creative thinking through building metaphors around identities and experiences using LEGO bricks. To demonstrate how the method can be used in tourism studies, we draw on examples from empirical research to illustrate the benefits and challenges of this methodological approach. These examples are from LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® workshops conducted with hosts and guests participating in the World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF) programme in New Zealand. LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® offered a metaphorical way for participants to construct and explain their ideal WWOOFing experience, representing sometimes complex, entrenched and emotional issues, and relationships that may have been difficult to express via traditional methods. LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® method welcomes a critical engaging dialogue about participants' lived experiences, their moralities and knowledge explored in a creative way allowing them to build metaphorical artefacts of their world and the self. The method enables participant driven, co-production of knowledge in a playful, free-flowing way to foster creative thinking, meanings and possible solutions. The paper contributes towards tourism scholarship by offering a critical discussion of the methodological framing of LEGO® SERIOUS PLAY® and processes for using the tool. For researchers, the method provides opportunities for gaining a deeper understanding of the social dimensions of tourism, to co-create spaces for knowledge exchange and develop an in-depth understanding of socially constructed relationships and realities by engaging in creative process. The method helps participants creatively communicate complex and sensitive issues, especially around their relationships – to objects, landscapes, people and identities – aspects that may otherwise be silenced by traditional research methods.
