A TALE OF MORE THAN TWO CITIES: DECONSTRUCTING SUSTAINABLE URBANITY

With a review of:

OECD, *Rethinking Urban Sprawl: Moving towards Sustainable Cities*, OECD Publishing, Paris 2018, 166 pages, Nico TILLIE, *Synergetic Urban Landscape Planning in Rotterdam: Liveable Low-Carbon Cities*, TU Delft, Delft 2018, 284 pages and Ashley DAWSON, *Extreme cities: The peril and promise of urban life in the age of climate change*, Verso, New York 2019, 378 pages

THE ISSUE AT STAKE: INEVITABLE SYMMETRIES

Even in the age of planetary urbanisation, cities differ in their status as arenas of facing events, incidents and extremities that all are reflections of the atmospheric – and thus global – change. Cities that receive most of the detailed attention in the three books particularly discussed in this overview are New York (Dawson, 2019) and Rotterdam (Tillie, 2018). However, the books' collective message goes far beyond these cities, and the third one (OECD, 2018) virtually amalgamates the industrialised world's urban data as regards the characteristics of the cities' and urban/metropolitan regions' physical *gestalt*.

All three books deal, in their own particular ways, with the pursuit of sustainability in an urban context. This endeavour requires both integrated policy and planning measures, but also devices, artefacts and social practices that connect the domains and worlds of dispersed groups of actors and organisations (cf. Karppi and Vakkuri, 2019, pp. 45–47). Ovink and Boeijenga (2018) highlight the inherent complexity of this task. As humankind, we are long past the luxury of choosing between actions that aim at energy transition, end of deforestation, sustainable urbanisation, building with nature, a circular economy or planetary security: we have to do it all, now (Ovink and Boeijenga, 2018, 8).

Thus, sustainable urbanity, with all its facets and an overall versatility that defies straightforward definitions calls for a deconstruction. That benefits from a simultaneous look at:

(1) the urban sprawl and how the phenomenon can be reframed and addressed with novel use of data;

(2) solutions that urban design may provide to adjust the fast urbanising planet and its transforming cities to best cope with the other planetary transformations; and

(3) social and societal transformations, predictable given the profound changes that take place in the material basis of our economies and institutions.

These are exactly the topics of the three core books in this overview, and they help us to take apart some elementary aspects of sustainable urbanity even if much of the bigger picture remains beyond their scope. In fact, there is an entire disciplinary approach, nascent and important to complement the three core books. It appears to be most common in Tillie's work with its recognisable landscape urbanist features (cf. Wells *et al.*, 2011; Rottle and Yocom, 2010). However, it has obvious theoretical linkages to Dawson and, on a more technical level, even to the OECD sprawl study. This discussion predates the publication of the three books by a few years: in 2016, an influential team of urban ecologists published what McPhearson and his colleagues (2016) called *a consensus to guide future urban ecological research*.

For McPhearson's team, urban sustainability was only one of the features that constituted their perspective on a "science of cities", ambitious even if still pending next step for urban ecology. It regards the urban hybrids with their distinctive human/non-human symmetries (*cf.* Latour, 1994) as complex adaptive systems, highly interconnected yet largely unpredictable, constantly rife with dynamics far from simple equilibria, and for that driven by the need to hoard energy for maintaining themselves (McPhearson *et al.*, 2016, p. 205; Batty, 2018). By widening the box where working for urban sustainability radiates as a crucial theme not only for scientific but also political endeavours (cf. Swyngedouw, 2006), they also provide a glue that helps to keep our three core books with their different approaches together.

What the triplet has in common is the local and regional level as a space of action while pursuing (more) sustainable urbanity. While this is a reasonable point of departure, it is obvious that in the face of an ongoing mega-scale global transformation, any meshwork of local action with its indisputable beacons of climate-related magnificence alone does not suffice. Some form of global arrangement for resource distribution and wealth creation logic is necessary for reaching tangible, actually sustainable outcomes for an equitable and equitably liveable planet. The question is if the market-based liberal democracy can facilitate such a transformation.

One of the three texts studied for this overview (OECD, 2018) avoids questioning this premise while another one (Dawson, 2019) regards revoking the market-liberalist basis as an absolute necessity. The third (Tillie, 2018) does not quite

seem to be aware where it should stand in this respect, mixing the approaches and calling for a profound transformation while resorting to the metrics and mind-sets that at least the more broad-minded pro-marketeers should find worth of a closer scrutiny. As a regional scientist and urban development scholar myself, I feel slightly uncomfortable admitting that action at the local and regional levels, even if reasonable and leading to locally significant and meaningful outcomes, often may be just a climate band aid instead of curing the potentially lethal disease. This is the spectre of a global transformation that casts its shadow over any urban action anywhere. Is there anything left for the localities but to adapt and persist, perhaps to survive?

THE SPRAWLING CITY OF NOWHERE

Let us approach the question with a volume that comes from an institution that not only believes in market economy but downright defines a plethora of public and financial management practices honest to the market. In *Rethinking urban sprawl*, the team of OECD-sponsored researchers makes the world of sprawling cities understandable through the lenses of orthodox economics. For a not card-carrying economist, the reading experience is slightly uncanny. It is, actually, a little bit like delving into a hypothetic statistical/methodological appendix of James Howard Kunstler's (1993) celebrated *Geography of Nowhere*. However, the point of departure is excellent. The OECD team's truly ambitious task was to give a holistic view of how the growth of world's cities and metropolitan areas challenge sustainability.

That task was fulfilled. Data from over 1100 urban areas (that mostly remain anonymous and unknown to the reader) from 29 countries and from three time points, 1990, 2000 and 2014 are compressed in the recurrent graphs that illustrate how different OECD countries relate with each other seen through the different aspects of urban form. The three available time points enable an assessment of a sort of "phase transition" in urbanisation, divided in two steps. The aggregation of data by countries, however, turns a great deal of basically worthwhile empirical data in a form that is not completely illegible but certainly challenging to any decision-maker in search of evidence-based support in the pursuit of most sustainable land-use forms. This obviously is a reflection of the fact that OECD is an organisation with member states, not with member cities or urban areas, and this fact seems to set the spatial scale for its analysis.

Nonetheless, the authors of the report have an obvious mission. They seek to give guidance to decision-makers through cross-country comparisons over time, a big picture that signals the urban reality of highly developed economies and

thus gives an economic theory-grounded menu of policy options based on objective assessments of the sustainability challenge for which the urban sprawl as an urban phenomenon stands. The idea is laudable, but, unfortunately, not without major restrictions – especially when it comes to practical guidance in actual decision-making situations. Detaching sprawl from its causes (and even to some of its consequences) may be good for the attempt of the scientifically objective account of the phenomenon. Yet, it renders the report's approach to the maximisation of its political acceptability. Such an exercise is far from the "science of cities" manifesto by McPhearson and his colleagues (2016) – a manifesto that *does* share the OECD report's belief in abundant data and the big picture.

While it is amply demonstrated that urban form is a major driver for the choice of transportation mode and due greenhouse gas emission and health effects (e.g. Van Dyck *et al.*, 2009; Forsyth et al., 2017), the question of sustainability and sustainable urbanity is even more complex. How service provision is arranged or how multimodality and exchanges from one form of transport to other impacts are among the key issues here. These are place-bound phenomena, however, tangled in urban objects that are, in their multitude and myriad cultural entanglements, hard to put in economic models. Yet, they differentiate the innumerable "*Somewheres*" for the sprawl to take place instead of the objectively compiled *"Nowheres"* that we frequently encounter in this report.

What else would have deserved to be taken into account are, first of all, developments within metropolitan real estate and the entire FIRE (finance, insurance, real estate) industry as a holder of financial interests that reflect in the urban structures. Secondly, the report is also missing the question of how differences in income distributions reflect in individual and family-level possibilities to choose how to use urban space. Thirdly, linked to the previous point, gentrification as a change-dynamics, and even as a tool for racial policy still in use, gets no mention in the report. Lastly, the fundamental transformations caused by global climate change and its real and potential impacts on urban space are discussed in rather implicit terms, particularly in coastal areas where the huge majority of the globally most important cities are. To delve into these issues, the report is best complemented with the two other core books discussed here.

Where I found the OECD report a truly worthwhile reading was the discussion and due diagrams that gave the multiple dimensions and drivers of the urban sprawl an expression honest to economic theory. In their technical forms that signalled what the phenomenon does look like in the theoretical city of Nowhere, they actually provided the non-economist reader with the space one craves to do the necessary mind games with the often noisy *"somewhereness"* referred to in the previous paragraphs. And, finally, as the report draws towards its final chapters, it is acknowledged that cities do not stand alone but comprise, together with their neighbouring municipalities, towns, villages or even other cities' systemic wholes that call for regional solutions for curbing sprawl. For the sake of sim-

plicity, let us call them arenas of metropolitan governance. This discussion brings the report closest to the planners' and decision makers' real, actual and endlessly noisy world filled with places in need for action.

LIVEABLE, LOW-CARBON ROTTERDAM IN THE MAKING

Nico Tillie (2018) introduces readers to the theme of his doctoral dissertation by rephrasing an established fact for the purposes of his treatise on urban landscape planning. Indeed, whether we humans, as a species and designers of civilisations, will be wiped out or survive, it will necessarily happen within the ramifications of, and conditioned by, the changing climate. There have been attempts starting from the heights of the current US presidency, to undermine this conviction through a determined denial and outright action such as the abolishment of public expert bodies formed for the guidance in the face of climate shocks (e.g. Flavelle, 2017). The fact that some of such bodies have reassembled, one of them invited to do so recently by the Governor of New York, Andrew Cuomo (Milman, 2019), only underlines the multitude of actors and arenas as well as the depth of determination for fighting the climate war.

If the OECD sought to filter the noise of individual places in its report by focusing on major, partly systemic patterns of urban design and transformations, Tillie does not hesitate to go to the richness of details that Rotterdam, a progressive European city, can provide. If the OECD text gives the reader an outsider feeling with regard to the actual transformations in cities included in the plan, Tillie compels the reader to ponder the financial and social, often also the physical and technical prerequisites for the measures that unfold from his many and indeed layered research questions.

I positively agree with Tillie on the causes and consequences of sub-optimal urban planning, gravely restrained by the missing interconnections on the planning field (Karppi and Vakkuri, 2019, 2020). Thus, whatever planning measures or "smartness" one seeks to build into the planning apparatuses, one needs to consider the capacity of these apparatuses and the entire administrative division of labour that surrounds them to work with a shared overview of the fundamental task at hand. Cities and those in charge of their planning and governance need to do their share in turning out and demonstrably securing more liveable and healthy urban environments to the majority of global population, their own inhabitants. Doing this means integrated energy and resource use/generation, food production and water management in a low to zero to negative GHG emissions setting. The scale of the task and the endurance would be startling, even without most of the world cities being threatened by rising sea-levels and severed storm seasons.

The traditional landscape architecture, transformed to, say, landscape urbanism (Duany and Talen, 2013) with an entire palette of ecological design ambitions has tasked itself with a new mission the world around. It is nothing less than to take a high-profile position among the enablers of the recreation from existing, well established cities to the future liveable non-carbon cities. Some elementary steps that need to be taken on this road is what Tillie demonstrates in his thesis. Here we may stumble into our attachment to places that we have occupied for decades and even millennia. We have done this for a good reason, as the locational amenities of these places have historically helped us to compile the civilisational treasures and often the very building blocks of our identities as nations. Transition of these places to what it will be required from us to survive may mean a costly war with highly unsure outcomes. We may need not only to re-plan and re-organise cities but physically relocate them (cf. McKibben, 2019). The fundamental question here is if we are ready to change the rules of the game, the organising principles of the economic system as we go.

The great game-changer, of course, stems from the need to curb CO_2 emissions, the emblem of the achievements and the entire socio-technical institutionalisation of the industrial era: how to "govern" it and how to settle the cost of this governance? With a slightly apologetic tone, Tillie chooses to operate with the concept of CO_2 neutrality as a target value for the planning system to pursue through the activities he develops and discusses in the thesis. It is highly typical that goals such as CO_2 neutrality are set, wrapped in a belief that some kind of technological and smart city-based gadgetry-driven solution will eventually emerge that does not require – or even leave space – for questioning the fairness or global legitimacy of the prevailing techno-institutional order (Graeber, 2015; cf. Townsend, 2014). This is obviously convenient, as that order is where our established routines for finding solutions to the encountered challenges stems from.

Who should read Tillie's insightful opus, then? Obviously, anyone with a (mis) belief that the global transformations and processes of counteracting them are too complex and too detached from the quite ordinary workings of our existing cities, here and now. As Tillie shows, even if the scale of global transformations is by definition gigantic, they are connected with the various things that urban planning works with and is able to enact (cf. Beauregard, 2015). His text is a practical treatise in urban pragmatism, focusing on meaningful action, that can be made to matter in the complex machineries of urban planning and design. However, the sheer scale of the transformations that the humankind faces *does* set its requirements to the local scene and local actors. Thus, the reader of Tillie's praise for urban situationality (cf. Paans and Pasel, 2014) in acting upon global challenges might well benefit from the more global systemic perspective (and a few hard-nosed realities the economists are sure to serve) that the OECD study reviewed above opens, say, as its companion.

SUPERSTORM SANDY: THE HARD WAY TO LEARN ABOUT EQUITY IN NYC – AND BEYOND

One may, however, feel uneasy with the pro-market approach that the OECD is committed to while doing what is in its powers in raising the awareness for curbing urban unsustainability. If this happens to be the case, a reader can resort to an alternative that helps to balance Tillie's urban situationality with a different broadening perspective. This alternative way of understanding global forces that challenge urban planning and design is provided in the third core book of this overview, i.e. *Extreme Cities* by Ashley Dawson (2019).

Departing from the idea of the prevailing economic order or Market Liberalism, if you will, as an eternally unmatched global "normal", Dawson puts to the foreground issues of equity and justice. These are topics that also appear in Tillie's text but without the prominence that Dawson grantsthem. Operating with the ontological and practical connections between forces and pressures, or drivers, understood as "global" on the one hand and "local" on the other, he directs the reader's attention to issues discussed, in an equally compelling way, by Mimi Sheller (2018) and Peter Moskowitz (2018) in their recent works.

We are not equal in the face of global transformations. Moreover, Dawson claims, forces that climate change sets in motion with their planetary, or truly planet-wide impacts even highlight the inequalities that are built in various socio-economic relationships, institutional orders and "cultural" settings that we live through in our daily practices. Together they both comprise and reveal a multi-scalar system of lacking social justice whose enactment does not require anyone's hostile intentions. Many of the system's key parameters, Dawson maintains, merely reproduce the fundamental flaws of the market mechanism. Thus, due to this basic tenet, they conduct the violating of equitability and social justice almost automatically, working as they are meant to. The cost of such "equitability deficit" is typically borne by the most vulnerable – unless particularly resisted by the rest of us (cf. Segalov, 2018).

But what should one resist and how? Dawson pinpoints several processes and examples of environmental (mis)conduct that have paved the humankind's way to managing and controling nature and its processes with the aim of profiteering, a simple yet complicated endeavour. He takes us from the Mississippi Delta to Jakarta and promises meagre if any success for the human attempts to work with the interface between water and land there. His examples provide a degree of historical depth, but, first and foremost, he casts a look filled with anxiety and anger at our contemporary undertakings with sea walls or artificial luxury island resorts – in a situation where, Dawson (2019, p. 125) instructs us, two billion people already live in the world's densely populated coastal areas that are particularly prone to devastating floods.

This figure of two billion alone gives an indication on the amount of money invested in those areas. Moreover, still more people and capital yearn to get there. Here Dawson finds both the cause, the tools and the location of resistance, and returns to the dramatic opening lines of his book. New York City and the Superstorm Sandy that ravaged it in 2012 is the scene of many of the issues in and symptoms of inequality that Dawson identifies. In the metaphorical sense, Sandy works for him as a generator that, while violating the regular functions of the city, reveals what works and what does not, giving also an indication of why something works, why something else does not, and what there is to be done to close the gap separating these two outcomes.

Paul Virilio (2007) turned to an Aristotelian tradition, explaining how an accident or a disaster could reveal the true nature of a system having encountered a disruption head-on. Dawson shows how Sandy not only exposed the shortcomings of New York City rescue and relief mechanisms in a flooding city, but how these shortcomings reproduced the fundamentals of class, wealth and race-based relations and how they led to different geometries of urgency if not outright selective neglect in responding to mounting human needs. Dawson's heroes come from the *Occupy Wall Street* movement and other civic sources of what he calls *Disaster Communism*, actors that the administration may not have regarded as its preferred partners in getting the city back on track, but that were among the first and, indeed, few to operate in the city's margins far beyond the confines marked by the real estate industry's financial interests.

For those who might find Dawson's points of departure a bit too radical, one might enjoy a parallel reading of Jesse Keenan's (2013) compact analysis of the haziness that the real estate sector itself faced with Sandy – or Lincoln institute's equally compact report on what the public authorities can learn from it (Pirani and Tolkoff, 2014). They, together with most of the books cited here, show the immense complexity and the taunting scale of the task of taking the necessary steps to more sustainable future urbanity, not only in Rotterdam or in New York, but everywhere.

THE TALE OF MORE THAN TWO CITIES

Eventually, there *is* a tale of two cities, too. In Henk Ovink's and Jelte Boeijenga's (2018) fascinating book about one process for supporting communities to recreate themselves from the ravages of Sandy, Ovink discussed his encounter with Shaun Donovan, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development in President Barack Obama's administration. They happened to meet in Rotterdam, and in and

around the city Donovan seemed to had had a crash course of the Dutch practices, institutional tools and mental tunings for working with an extreme abundance, potential or real, of water as a fact with which regional planning and urban design just needs to acknowledge and act. The inspiration derived from the discussions during a road trip across Dutch water landscapes contributed, the documented story goes, to an inception of a multiannual project *Rebuild by Design*. Its aim, in addition to practically and situationally support Sandy-hit areas, was to use the duly created experiences as a trapdoor to expand the bandwidth of American climate-sensitive urban planning, design, and policy mindset.

And here – in the midst of this jubilation for the dawn of a more sustainable urbanism – glimmers a problem emerge. We can recognise a plethora of global issues that are strongly related to climate change and sustainability, such as economic oscillations that threaten institutions and administrations, or demographic transformations and health issues rife with human, societal and financial implications. Most of the discussions that take place in the three core books of this overview and a huge majority of other works cited focus on highly developed economies and their prime urban areas. The most noteworthy exception is Dawson, who includes the Global South in his storyline. Climate and sustainability crises met in the urban settings are customarily portrayed and dissected from the First-World perspective and, more than implicitly, as First-World challenges. Yet, it is the cities of the Global South that grow fastest and often in erratic ways (cf. Brillembourg, 2016) and that may be most perilously positioned as regards next Superstorms, Hurricanes and Typhoons.

The three core books discussed here, and how the challenges of sustainable urbanity are contemplated in them, belong to the expanding body of literature for understanding the layered complexity of a global quest, needed if the cities are to be made more sustainable. However, this endeavour needs to be stretched far beyond the two metaphorical First-World cities for a more profound impact. With strong institutions backed by sound economic systems, accumulated wealth and state systems not annihilated by hunger, corruption and other lethal sources of inefficiencies, they should be best equipped to find and work with solutions even while encountering extreme incidents. For many of the world's mega cities, either existing or those yet to emerge, this is not the case. *Their* tale of finding doable ways of promoting sustainable urbanity in their own terms is only gradually making its way to the global awareness.

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Ari-Veikko ANTTIROIKO, *Wellness City, Health and Well-Being in Urban Economic Development*, Palgrave Pivot, Cham 2018, 159 pages

This small and compact book of 159 pages (including index and references) is an easy to read analysis of why wellness companies, products and activities can contribute to the welfare of urban economic systems. Regardless of the title and the scope of the topic, in its core it is a traditional location study on the effects of the development of one specific sector within an urban system and as such a classical economic-geographical study.

The book consists of eight short and concise chapters, in which the idea of a wellness city is discussed in clear steps. The book starts with a conceptual debate about wellness (including welfare, well-being and health) and the wellness industry and its possible spillover effects. It continues with how this well-being industry fits the urban context. At the same time it argues that the sector is also a regional and even a global industry. The author develops a narrative where this specific sector is described as a long standing and, at the same time, emerging industry offering ample opportunities to have a significant economic impact on local economic development. The book ends with three more holistic chapters where the different dimensions of the industry are discussed, and a suggestion how these can be developed into strategies for 'glocal' economic development: local specific strategies of a global industry and how we can use this in an inclusive policy for all consumers of the city.

Even though the focus is on well-being and on well-being providers and services as a more emerging industry, the book is, in fact, a traditional location study. The sector and its effect on cities are studied using a number of relevant economic-geographic theories regarding these locational issues, e.g. the

export-base theory, Marshallian cluster theory, and externalities, consumption space, and economic multiplier. Hence, the book can be very useful as an example of a more in-depth study of specific sectors and as an exercise of how to use old tools for new topics. As such, the book is of value for students of public policy, city planning, economic development, and those working in the tourism and leisure industry.

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Alex JOHNSON, *Book Towns. Forty-Five Paradises of the Printed Word*, Frances Lincoln, an imprint of the Quarto Group, London 2018, 192 pages

When using public transport – the local bus, the tram or the subway – you do not see many people reading books anymore. Rather, they are watching content on or playing with their smart phones or other electronic devices, with the few exceptions of some elderly ladies reading books. In such an era, a book – rather a guide – about an international trend to install a cluster of shops selling used and/or antique books in little villages might be quite surprising. Is this an anti-trend or just a sentimental compensation or a surrogate for a lost world full of books? After all, we are living in a time in which more and more bookshops, especially smaller ones, have disappeared or have been replaced by mega-bookstores or internet dealers.

From the viewpoint of an urban observer, it is quite apparent that the withering away of shops selling used and antiques books – the latter are the more valuable ones – is not only due to or on account of a lack of interest in them. Rather, it is a combined product of the rise of shop rents in cities and the advance of a 'global' book market via internet trade – resulting in lower prices for used or antique books except those which are really rare or valuable – mostly sold by specialised dealers via catalogues or via auctions. However, the prognosis of the last years that books will soon no longer be printed but rather replaced by electronically distributed texts turned out to be not quite true. Printed books and electronically distributed ones coexist and the former still far outrange the latter ones. And there is even a new trend of distribution of printed books that are not used anymore and that are not accepted by dealers: the free availability and distribution of books via open shelves in many buildings and places ('little free libraries'). This has created not only new channels for distributing books. It has also created new opportunities for social communication in many places.

The continuing interest in printed and used books, combined with an old interest in finding interesting things, seems to be the base for book towns as well. Johnson, the author of *Book Towns*, wrote: "A book town is simply a small town, usually rural and scenic, full of bookshops and book related industries" (p. 7). And the trend of creating and establishing book villages, the topic of the book under review, might be a trend based on different factors: the attraction of specific territories, the opportunity for local book shops to sell books with lower costs, and the attraction for some regions, villages or just nice places to profile them against other ones.

In *Book Towns* you will find a well written and nicely illustrated story about the beginning of this trend. The wave of book towns started in the 1960s with Hay-on-Wye in Wales and is now present in many other European countries. The book also lists some examples from overseas. Just to name a few of over thirty-one examples of book towns: Ascona in Switzerland, Becherel in France, Bellprat in Spain, Borrby in Sweden, Bredevoort in the Netherlands, Damme in Belgium, Fjaerland in Norway, Monterregio in Italy, Selfoss in Iceland, and Wünsdorf in Germany. The book includes examples from Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, and the USA as well.

Book Towns illustrates how in a globalised book market dominated by the internet, there is still room for niches. Remember: Amazon started with selling new books and has 'ruined' many other book chains. It still sells books apart from its complete range of all things or gadgets anyone wants to order. Even in the special market of selling used or antique books, Amazon is now playing a dominant role via its portals – internationally via AbeBooks or for the market of books in German via ZVAB (Zentrales Verzeichnis antiquarischer Bücher). However, the rise and the continuing existence of book villages appears to be an example of the development of local and regional niches in a globalised world, offering interested booklovers the old experience of finding books by looking through a collection of books in shops organised in a way, but still full of surprises and unknown treasures.

In addition, *Book Towns* shows how local and regional development can be supported by innovative ideas, especially pioneering attitudes to develop peripheral places outside urban centres. Insofar this book can be recommended not only for collector booklovers, but it can be also useful for planners in their pursuit of innovative and inspiring ideas for the development of regional peripheries. And let us not forget that this book is well produced and illustrated: it is an informative travel guide for booklovers which indeed offers 'Forty-Five Paradises of the Printed Word'.

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Rachel DODDS, Richard W. BUTLER (eds.), *Overtourism: Issues, Realities and Solutions*, De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston, 2019, 288 pages

Most cities and regions do serious attempts to attract holidaymakers. Especially in places that look for a new economic future, the tourism sector is seen as a useful source of income and jobs. For the past few years, however, interest in the downsides of tourism has been growing. Some commentators even refer to 'overtourism'. Additionally, the World Tourism Organization is concerned about the phenomenon and defines overtourism as '… the impact of tourism on a destination, or parts thereof, that excessively influences perceived quality of life of citizens and/or quality of visitors experiences in a negative way' (UNWTO, 2018, p. 4). Venice is the classic example of overtourism, but also places like Amsterdam, Dubrovnik and Machu Picchu struggle with the consequences of excessive visitor numbers.

How can overtourism be understood, what are the relevant issues and how should places cope with the challenges? With these questions in mind Dodd and Butler, two respected tourism professors, asked a range of scholars from universities and research institutes to contribute to the collection *Overtourism: Issues, Realities and Solutions*. The result is an accessible book of 18 chapters that consider what it means when too many people are visiting the same area. As such, it is the first academic volume on the topic. The book's introduction is followed by a chapter on the enablers of overtourism. Here, the editors highlight a number of economic, technological and strategic factors, such as the fact that more people can afford to travel, the importance of social media as well as a short-term focus and lack of coordination among tourism stakeholders. After this, the book is divided into three parts: theoretical aspects, case studies, and governance challenges.

In Part I, overtourism is positioned theoretically and related to the environment, the concept of authenticity, the role of social media, and the Tourism Area Life Cycle. Wall (chapter 3) and Rickly (chapter 4) suggest that tourist crowds may have counterproductive effects on the natural environment and local culture, thus damaging the very reasons why people visit an area. My favorite chapter in this part of the book is the one by Gretzel on the linkages between social media and overtourism. Obviously, social media has popularised certain destinations leading to touristic herd behavior. At the same time, Gretzel notes that social media can be a useful tool leading to 'responsible Instagramming' and fighting overtourism. In his chapter on the Tourism Area Life Cycle, Butler also makes an interesting point: it is not the number of visitors per se that causes overtourism, but the feeling among locals that 'their' place is overrun and that they have lost control over what is happening.

Part II deals with eight case studies of overtourism across the world. I particularly enjoyed the mix of well-known and rather unfamiliar examples. For instance, most of us know that Thailand, Barcelona, Venice and Prague have been overwhelmed by tourists for some time. Accordingly, chapters 8 (Hess), 9 (Goodwin), 10 (Nolan and Séraphin) and 11 (Rončák) are devoted to these destinations, the

ways in which they are affected by overtourism and how they try to manage it. In turn, chapters 7, 12, 13 and 14 discuss cases most readers might be less familiar with. Cruz and Legaspi (chapter 7) reflects on the temporary closure of Boracay beach in the Philippines in 2018 to stop the island's further environmental decline caused by overcrowding. In his interesting contribution on the Hajj in Mecca (chapter 13), Qurashi describes what it means for a city when it is visited every year during a very short period of time. And chapters 12 (Weber *et al.*) and 14 (Butler) argue that overtourism can also become an issue for smaller places as well as the countryside. Both the Swiss town of Lucerne and the Scottish highlands and islands show how important it is to balance the desire to make money on tourism and the need to respond to local concerns.

In Part III, the challenges of overtourism for policy makers and other stakeholders are discussed. As is often the case in urban and regional development, the key question is how to invent long-term, integral and coordinated solutions to tackle excessive visitor numbers. In chapter 15 Jamieson and Jamieson note that local specificities make it impossible to develop a 'one size fits all' approach that is relevant for every place. However, Becken and Simmons (chapter 16) see cooperation between stakeholders as a universal success factor, although they simultaneously show how hard it is to achieve it in practice. In her contribution on the role of policy, planning and governance (chapter 17) Joppe comes to a similar conclusion: combatting overtourism is difficult, all the more because there are several scale levels of governance (national, regional and local) involved.

All in all, *Overtourism: Issues, Realities and Solutions* makes an important contribution to the understanding of overtourism in cities and regions across the globe. One of the strengths of the book is its unique blend of theoretical reflection, telling case study examples and policy relevance. As such, the volume provides both researchers and practitioners with valuable and up-to-date insights into the phenomenon of overtourism. I am sure the book will appeal to anyone who is interested in geography, planning, tourism, and policy studies. And perhaps the book can even have a wider mission and audience. The fact is that one inevitably starts to think about one's own travel behavior while reading the chapters. Is it really necessary to visit Barcelona, Prague or Lucerne in a world where there are so many other interesting places to see? Indeed, we should first look at ourselves before we point a finger at others. Or, as the editors rightly mention at the end of this excellent book: 'Conclusion: we have seen the enemy and it is us' (Dodds and Butler, 2019, p. 273).

REFERENCE

UNWTO (2018), '*Overtourism'? Understanding and Managing Urban Tourism Growth beyond Perceptions*, Madrid: World Tourism Organization.

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