



Book Review

C.M. Hall, G. Prayag, A. Amore. (Eds.), *Tourism and resilience: Individual, organizational and destination perspectives*, Tourism essentials, Vol. 5. Channel View Publications, Bristol (2018). xv + 189 pp, (Pbk.), £24.95 ISBN: 9781845416294

Resilience is not a new concept but the introduction of resilience thinking to tourism researchers is recent and ongoing. From this perspective, the publication of this book is timely and the work is a novel and useful contribution to the literature. It is not a large document, as it consists of six chapters that include numerous diagrams, an extensive list of references and an index. The book is concise and covers much ground in an accessible manner.

The first chapter sets the context of a world that is experiencing both slow and rapid, even extreme, changes that demand human responses and management at a variety of scales. The examples of both slow and fast change that are provided are predominantly environmental but it is argued that the concepts are more broadly applicable. Resilience is defined initially as “the capacity of a system to absorb disturbance and reorganise while undergoing change so as to retain essentially the same function, structure, identity and feedbacks ... that existed before the disturbance began” (p. 2). However, it is later acknowledged that resilience may also involve progression to new states. The related notions of vulnerability and adaptation are introduced, and the necessity of adopting a systems approach, which is fundamental to resilience thinking, is emphasized.

The second chapter addresses the meaning of resilience and essentially distinguishes between definitions derived from an engineering perspective, which sees resilient systems as returning to their original state following a perturbation, from a socio-ecological perspective, which embraces the possibility of regime shift to a new state. Both approaches to resilience are relevant and are considered in the book but it seems that the latter is likely to be more pertinent to tourism situations. Likewise the importance of scale and relationships between scales, which constitute the main organizing rationale of the book, are examined and links are made, briefly, to tourism.

The three core chapters are arranged according to scale: individual, organizational and destination resilience. Towards the end of the book particularly, there is also some discussion of community resilience. This works reasonably well, permitting explication of differences among and relationships across scales. It would be too cumbersome to attempt to address all possible scales and this is a sensible compromise. However, this reviewer noticed that there was not a single reference to households even though they constitute important units in both the supply of and demand for tourism. Given that scales are linked, it is perhaps inevitable, even appropriate, that the chapters sometimes draw upon the same references and cases.

The final chapter provides a reflection on resilience thinking and tourism systems, still largely from a conceptual perspective. There is a brief discussion of the relationships between resilience and sustainable

development. Given that both are used to address similar questions and they are often espoused by the same authors, especially in the tourism literature, a more extended discussion would have added greatly to the utility of the book. This is especially the case as there is divergence in opinions about the compatibility of sustainability and resilience thinking (the former often being based on assumptions about steady states as being desirable and normal following engineering definitions, whereas the latter is rooted in notions of non-linearity, the unexpected and extreme events akin to socio-ecological definitions).

Precision requires that careful attention be given to definitions, particularly in a situation where a variety of competing definitions exist, and they are fundamental to the conceptualizations that are proposed. However, the work struggles to get beyond the definitional, which pervades every chapter and is even present in the penultimate pages in the concluding chapter. There is much conceptualization, which is an important contribution of the book, but a distinct lack of empirical materials, which is at times acknowledged. In large part this reflects the state of research on tourism, as seen through the lens of resilience thinking and, accordingly, an important research need and opportunity.

It is suggested on the cover that the book is designed to be an upper level undergraduate and postgraduate primer and, indeed, the work has some of the trappings of a course text, such as lists of points, numerous diagrams, boxed cases and suggestions for further reading. On the other hand, there is little empirical material, cases are not developed adequately for full comprehension, the content is challenging, particularly for those who may lack prior knowledge of the many concepts that are introduced, and few courses now exist that adopt this perspective. Boxes may be appreciated by those with short attention spans but this reviewer would prefer important points to be integrated into the main text, rather than being diverted to supplementary materials.

The book is a valuable contribution to the literature as an introduction to resilience thinking at a time when this is beginning to penetrate tourism research and practice. It draws heavily on research from outside of the tourism domain, thereby introducing readers to a broader body of knowledge. However, this is a weakness as well as a strength, for the tourism content is less extensive and persuasive than might be expected. In large part this reflects the state of knowledge and the limited body of tourism-specific research that can currently be drawn upon. Many of the conceptualizations, frameworks and diagrams, although helpful, lack testing and validation in tourism contexts. While it is acknowledged in a number of places that more research is needed, it is also recognized that circumstances regarding change management vary widely and outcomes are contingent. Adaptive management is espoused but the nature of the research that will help managers or further tourism scholarship is not made clear. What kinds of research on human-environment systems are required to support resilience thinking and are young tourism scholars being trained adequately to ask and address such questions?

This reviewer found the book informative and helpful as an introduction to resilience thinking, easy to read in spite of the sometimes technical content, disappointing in the often limited engagement with

tourism, and thought-provoking regarding the unasked, yet alone unanswered, questions about what the contents might mean for tourism research and education.

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