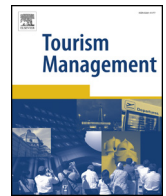




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Book Review

Slow Tourism, Food and Cities, M. Clancy.
Routledge, London (2018). 248 pp., (Hbk.), £70.
00 ISBN: 978-1-138-92091-0, (E-book) £35.99,
ISBN: 978-1-315-68671-4

The concept of the slow movement is almost part of mainstream, non-academic conversation. ‘Slow Food’ probably has the furthest reach in public consciousness and the editor of *Slow Tourism, Food and Cities*, Michael Clancy, states that as an official movement it has 150,000 members in 150 countries. Clancy recalls that the ‘Slow Cities’ (*Cittàslow*) movement, originally conceived in Italy in late 1999, was developed from Slow Food and was followed, at least as a coined term, by ‘Slow Tourism’.

The brief (p. 2) sets out to examine the slow movement in a socio-historical moment, associated rhetoric, the larger set of practices of which the movement is a part and, finally, how it manifests itself in action on the ground. In other words, the intention is to focus the lens from the general to the specific, from the philosophical to the practical.

On the whole, the separate contributions from a range of North American and European (principally, Italian and Spanish) contributors are clearly written and have sufficient conformity in approach to give the book stylistic coherence. There are some stand out chapters and plenty of interesting observations. However, although the scene is set well by Clancy in Chapter 1 (Introduction) the organisation of the book into three parts (Locating Slow; Places and Practices of Slow; Comparative Perspectives) does not link overtly enough to each constituent element of the brief. The reader is left to make the connections from each contribution. Similarly, the division between the second and third parts of the book is not maintained: Part 2 ends (Chapter 10) with a case study of *Cittàslow* towns in the Emilia-Romagna region of Northern Italy and Part 3 starts (Chapter 11) with a case study of food tourism in the alpine region of Algovia, Germany. Why one or the other is more about places and practices, or offers more of a comparative perspective, is not clear. Such organisational glitches stop the book from becoming a must read state of the art review. Furthermore, there is a tendency for too many individual contributors to work through background definitions and meanings, without the confidence that they will be covered and discussed elsewhere (e.g. in the opening section, Part 1). That further reduces the overall power of the book. The sum is not greater than the parts, an outcome that often happens in collections of essays.

Locating Slow (Part 1) consists of the introduction and four other chapters. In Chapter 3 *Slow tourism: A theoretical perspective*, Viviana Calzati and Paola de Silva outline existing theoretical understandings of slow tourism based around perspectives derived from sustainability, modality (time and space) and tourist experience. Without an obvious rationale they reorganise the theoretical perspective into three paradigms for framing future research projects: the experience of slowness and responsible (minimal) consumerism; sustainability at a territorial level; and individual well-being. Arguably, this comes too early in the book, before the foundation stones are fully set. Suggestions regarding a

research agenda might be more appropriate as part of an editor’s conclusion. A firmer base to locate slow can be derived from Chapter 4 *Slow travel and tourism: New concept or new label* in which the authors Peter McGrath and Richard Sharpley discuss the chronological emergence of slow travel and slow tourism. Among other suggestions, they argue that slow travel is more a mind-set than a form of travel that is confined to fast-paced or slow-paced contexts. In that regard there is similarity with the contribution of Jennie Germann Molz in Chapter 2 *Slow mobilities and the politics of pace* in which she states ‘What matters is not how fast or how slow we travel but how we ... harness pace as a way of making sense of ourselves, of our travel companions, and of the world’ (p.30). McGrath and Sharpley additionally argue that slow tourism lends itself to regions with many stakeholders engaged in the slow movement. As an aside that contradicts their view that hanging out in a café with locals (presumably any café not just one with an owner who supports the slow movement) is one expression of the slow travel mind-set. In an interim summary on slow travel McGrath and Sharpley remark that other tourist types (new tourists, alternative tourists and responsible tourists) do not seem so far removed from tourists engaged in slow travel, which leads to their final remark that ‘... it remains uncertain to what extent slow travel and slow tourism differ from existing tourism concepts, philosophies and practices’ (p.60). The very title of Chapter 6 *Creative tourism as slow tourism* by Roberto Lavarini and Rosantonietta Scramaglia also indicates convergence with other tourisms. One wonders whether, to spice up the book, all authors were (appropriately) challenged to throw doubt on the distinctiveness and power of the slow movement, something the editor himself does in Chapter 5 *Practicing Slow: Political and ethical implications*. After a well-developed consideration of slow food and slow tourism within the wider remit of ethical consumption his conclusion is a wary one: that slow food and slow tourism ‘operate side by side with existing ethical values inherent in neoliberalism’ (p.73). On such grounds the slow movement is not so revolutionary.

Part 2 (Places and practices of slow) includes contributions that focus on food and cities. In Chapter 7 *Slow food in slow tourism* Paolo Corvo and Raffaele Maticena argue that gastronomy as part of slow tourism can help develop, at one and the same time, the defence of a local gastronomic culture as well as the sharing or transmission of that culture from host to guest. In Chapter 8 *Slow and intelligent cities: When slow is also smart* Giovanni Tocci first summarises the characteristics of a smart city, then outlines the requirements for *Cittàslow* certification which, at the time of this review, extends to 236 cities in 30 counties and territories (*Cittàslow*, 2018). Tocci then demonstrates how slow and smart are mutually compatible. Chapter 10 *Cittàslow: The Emilia-Romagna case* by Gabriele Manella is a useful follow through of *Cittàslow* in action within a region and, specifically, a constituent town called Santarcangelo. The appraisal is refreshingly critical and Manella cautions that there are gaps between institutional efforts regarding *Cittàslow* and the awareness of local operators and citizens.

Part 3 (Comparative Perspectives) is not really a comparison but a compilation of slow tourism case studies at work. In Chapter 11 *Successful integration of slow and sustainable tourism* by Katia Laura Sidali

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and María de Obeso, the example of food tourism in the alpine region of Algovia, Germany, there is an interesting if largely descriptive representation of the nexus between sustainability and slow tourism and in particular two slow tourism dimensions: deceleration and attachment to place. In Chapter 12 *The experiential value of slow tourism* by José Manuel Hernández Mogollón et al. it is suggested that there is a need for reconceptualization. It is maintained that environmental consciousness can be subsumed within 'experiential value' leading to a new nexus of 'experiential value' and 'quality of life-happiness'. This reviewer needed more convincing although the reader is helped by a useful summary figure, a graphical aid that is also used to good effect in Chapter 11 and might have been used in many other chapters, too. Further case studies in Part 3 relate to Cambridge, UK (Chapter 13), and Tuscany, Italy and the Okanagan Valley, Canada (Chapter 14).

This book has its strengths but, unwittingly one presumes, they are prised out from multiple slow reads rather than a fast, sharp read from

cover to cover. One wonders whether a day or two spent reading a set of journal articles, together with an additional period reading contributions from practitioners on the internet, would facilitate an equal conceptual understanding and knowledge base of slow tourism, food and cities. It might be a close call, which rather opens to question whether the book achieves its full potential.

Reference

Cittàslow (2018). <http://www.cittaslow.org/> [Accessed May 18, 2018].

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