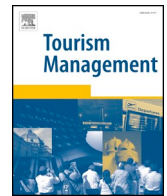




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Book Review

Degrowth in Tourism: Conceptual, Theoretical and Philosophical Issues, K. Andriotis. CABI, Wallingford (2018). 211 pp., (Hbk.), £85.00
ISBN: 9781786392787

I received this book to review with great enthusiasm especially given the title and backboard blurb that stated '*Degrowth in Tourism explores newly-emerging development and philosophic approaches A comprehensive review of the subject*'. Unfortunately, I was quickly disappointed. When I read a new book I expect to learn something new, have my thinking challenged and then understand an alternative view of the world. This book does not deliver any of the promises made in the blurb. I also expect a new book to provide me with a balanced synthesis of thinking in the field. Instead we are treated to a compendium of the author's previous publications in the different chapters.

My real concerns began when I read the Preface. I was expecting the book to be contextualised by the long history of environmental thinking that emanates from the limits to growth paradigm advanced by key authors such as Rachel Carson's (1962) *Silent Spring* and Paul Ehrlich's (1968) *The Population Bomb* through to subsequent reports such as the UN Commission on Environment and Development (1987) *Our Common Future*. Key debates such as Schumacher's (1973) *Small is Beautiful* and Meadows, Meadows, Randers, and Behrens (1972) *Limits to Growth* would seem to me to be the logical antecedent to the degrowth agenda the author presents. Even in the tourism literature, there are roots of the degrowth agenda in seminal studies in the 1970s, such as Bryden (1973).

Instead, we are presented with a book that is largely the product of the digital age where many journal articles draw upon the last five to ten years of literature that search engines readily identify. A browse of any research library's shelves would significantly expand the breadth of thinking in this book to justify its claim to be 'comprehensive'. For this reason, I would argue that the book fails to situate the degrowth agenda within a philosophical basis. Clearly this is a matter of academic judgement and opinion. However, the book lacks a theoretical framework rooted in very strong antecedents, relying instead upon a narrow conceptualisation of development. Therefore, the discussion of alternative paradigms is partial and many perspectives are predated by uncited seminal literature.

As a geographer, I find the explanation of Miossec's (1976) model as an example of development rather odd where the author attributes the model to a diffusionist paradigm. It is, arguably, an early example of the tourism area life cycle as a detailed read of an early text by D. G. Pearce (1981) suggests. As Ashworth and Page (2011, p. 3) argued, Christaller's (1966) 'pioneering spatial model' identified tourism as a 'function of urban peripheries not urban centres. This line of thought continued with the concept of 'pleasure peripheries' (e.g. Miossec, 1976; Yokeno, 1968) in which recreation zones demarcated by travel

times were traced around urban centres, whose function was to provide the demand for, not the supply of, leisure space and facilities'.

It is somewhat surprising, therefore, that the fundamental concept at the heart of Miossec - of core and periphery - is not discussed with any sophistication. This paradox for economic development models really needs explanation as the European mass tourism growth of the 1960s–1980s, spatially concentrated in the pleasure periphery of Southern Europe, almost reverses the conventional models of economic development regarding the pleasure periphery. It is interesting to see the work of the late Stephen Britton debated in the book but arguably the contribution of Britton (1991) would benefit from a stronger focus on the discussion of capitalism.

When the book begins to address the subject matter in Chapters 3 and 4, many of the earlier criticisms also apply. There are many good books that review the limits of the growth debate in tourism (e.g. Mathieson & Wall, 1982; Wall & Mathieson, 2005) and it begs one fundamental question: how is degrowth any different to the notion of implementing the concept of carrying capacity that dominated tourism research in the period since the 1970s and that was superseded by the sustainability paradigm? The book makes several claims about degrowth as a social movement but this is likely to be only a very small niche group of travellers and destinations. I question how degrowth and overtourism are interconnected as both have their roots in similar philosophical debates. This is really a book about alternative tourism, a theme that is not new (see Smith & Eadington, 1992) and it is certainly not a major theoretical contribution to the tourism literature as the title purports to do. To my mind, a major theoretical contribution is Urry's (1990) *The Tourist Gaze* that was a game changer in tourism research. *Degrowth in Tourism* is not a game changer in my humble opinion. It does not really break new ground nor would I readily identify it as paradigm shifting. Overall it lacks the maturity and depth one expects from a learned synthesis of the field.

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