
Book Review

Reviewed by Maximiliano E. Korstanje

Email: mkorst@palermo.edu

Over-tourism: excesses, discontents and Measure in travel and Tourism.

Claudio Milano

by: Joseph Cheer and Marina Novelli (Editors)

Published 2019

by CABI, Wallingford, first edition, 264 pages

ISBN 978-1786399823

Specialists and colleagues of all pundits agree that over-tourism, doubtless, is a serious problem for the sustainability, future and well function of tourist system. In this novel editorial project, Claudio Milano, Joseph Cheer and Marina Novelli gather ten chapters (and 3 short cases in focus) debating on different aspects of over-tourism in different cities and destinations worldwide. As editors overtly acknowledge, authors were carefully selected following a multidisciplinary perspective come from different nations and cultures. No less true seems to be that this multiplicity gives to the book an all-encompassing view of the problem.

As the previous backdrop, the first chapter, which is authored by Francesco Vicentin and Dario Bertocchi, centres on the interesting case of Venice city in Italy. One of the aspects that explain over-tourism seems to be determined by the interplay of two contrasting cultural values. To some extent, society accepts the mandate of promoting tourism as the sign of economic progress and development, a point which is fitted to the saturation of destinations. To put the same in other terms, tourism becomes an ever-growing industry while the local resources of destinations are seriously compromised. Even if governments look to reduce the saturation of the city increasing taxes, these policies represent a fertile ground of further profits for the city. This generates paradoxically a vicious circle which is very hard to resolve. The second chapter (Blazquez Salom, 2019) continues this direction placing the city of Palma (Majorca) as the main study-case. They stress on the negative effects of over-tourism such as a notable increase of visitor numbers which triggers real-estate speculation, without mentioning higher costs of living which leads invariably to poverty and exclusion. The process of touristification in this city generates a double effect. On one hand, it accelerated the closure of local retail shops which are automatically recycled as new gentrified shops more oriented to the tourist's taste. On another, a gradual process of inflation is gradually affecting seriously the quality life of city-dwellers. While the capital is expanding according to tourism growth, no less true is that low-income inhabitants are forced to move to peripheral areas of the city. Complementarily, Mathias Pecot and Carla Ricaurte-Quijano (third chapter) explore the effects of over-tourism in Las Galapagos (Ecuador). A whole portion of studies in the fields of over-tourism is placed with a focus

in the global North. This chapter, instead, focuses on the dynamics and limitations of development theory to be applied in the Global South. In a nutshell, authors acknowledge over-tourism should be conceived as a global problem which exhibits a radical rupture in the pact between hosts and guests. To a major or lesser degree, this rupture is given by a decline in the quality of lives of city-dwellers. The Galapagos offers an idealised landscape revolving around the archetype of a lost paradise, in which case, it targets the interests of international demand. Over the years, tourism development situated as a panacea ensuring progress and civilisation for the Island; but today, this destination seems to be saturated because of the ever-increasing demand. The case of Kyoto, well-described in the focus 1 section by Daisure Abe, seems to be pretty different than the other discussed chapters. People travelling Kyoto is not interested in ecological issues but is in quest of the millenarian heritage, combined with the technological office buildings. Unlike other destinations, Kyoto's authorities never expanded their hotel infrastructure, opening the doors for the rise and expansion of countless secondary homes (known as *Min-paku*). The digital technologies like Airbnb help in the explosion of informal lodging creating a serious dispute between locals and foreign tourists. In consonance with the other case-studies, Kyoto is subject to a gentrification process where local neighbourhoods not only witness gradual inflation but also how the social scaffolding is radically shifted. The fourth and fifth chapters analyse two contrasting cultural backgrounds, the case of Iceland (Gunnar Thor Johannesson and Anna Lund) and Costa Rica (Ernest Cañada). While the former signals to the countless challenges face Reykjavik as an incipient peripheral destination (at least in comparison of the Mediterranean destinations), the latter brings the problem of small islands saturated by the invasion of mass-tourism. Iceland calls us to think beyond the classical effects of over-tourism, alternating different paths in a hyper-mobile world with what Massey dubbed as thrown togetherness which describes a destination not as a static entity but as an ever-changing constellation of trajectories. This means that tourism serves as a contradictory force in the view that once the destination becomes a pristine and comfortable place for potential visitors, tourism comes to stay, but paradoxically in so doing, this authentic landscape is corrupted and commoditised. As Castañada puts it, Costa Rica shows a dual scenario wherein the rural contexts –like Guanacaste– tourists are agglomerated in specific coastal areas or zones since the peripheral contexts are subordinated to the leisure-hot spots or main tourist destinations. It leads to a centre-periphery logic, which far being breached, is reinforced. Through the articulation of tourism policies, the real estate capital reorganises not only the coastal areas but also the whole territory –most probably running the risk of disorganising the pre-existing rural communities–. In small islands, like Costa Rica, the struggle for the monopolisation of natural resources –like water– occupies a central position in the hostility against foreign tourists. In the sixth chapter, Roos Gerritsma centres his analysis in the case of Amsterdam which seems to be the icon of liberal lifestyle and the open mind. The efforts of governmental agencies as well as policy-makers to situate Amsterdam as a global city enthusiastic with foreign visitors, drug consumption and prostitution, adjoined to the visit of neighbouring cities and counties, has created an effect of saturation in the city. Like the other cases earlier-cited in this review, the appearance of digital platforms like Booking.com or Airbnb created more complex dynamics that scholars should approach. In Focus 2, Kephher-Gona examines how tourism resonates in African cultures. Recently, African nations have entered a competition to show their brands. These efforts

came to fruition but with some unforeseeable consequences: over-tourism. The seventh chapter (Vieira da Cunha) discusses the key-factors and finely-ingrained mechanisms that ushered Rio de Janeiro to real estate development and gentrification. It is important not to lose the sight of the fact that slum-tourism plays a leading role in the configuration of favelas as new tourist destinations. Although tourism was originally adopted to revitalise the economies of favelas, the interests of foreign tourists to gaze poverty and pauperism has engendered a paradoxical situation. Tourism was oriented to struggle against a social malady as poverty or violence, but it was commoditised as the symbolic core of slum-tourism. As a result, poverty tends to be replicated, or at least in the Favelas. Finally, favelados are systematically excluded from the economic progress tourism started. The chapter eighth (Costa et al., 2019) reviews the effects of tourism in Portuguese cities taking particular attention to the role of tourism consumption and urban planning. Per their viewpoint, short-term accommodation explosion is esteemed as one of the main causes of over-tourism today. Of course, Portugal is not considered a typical saturated destination –whether we see other cases– but there is an unquestionable increase of tourists prompting negative aftermaths for the country. The ninth (Canosa et al., 2019) and tenth chapters (Ioannides), last but not least, are reserved to the study of Australian cities in the zone of New South Wales, and Greenland (Denmark). Canosa et al. (2019) appeal to the complexity of adopting standardised policies to reduce over-crowding and over-tourism. In fact, the involving stakeholders (non-government organisations, locals, tourists, and investors) pursue different contrasting interests. This is particularly troublesome for narrowing to pro-sustainable practices which in some cases are accepted or resisted by the group which feels it has been relegated from the decision making process. Rather, Greenland offers a vast range of inaccessible territory since the interior is fully covered by ice. Although Greenland as a study-case may be very well associated with Iceland, interesting remarks are done in this chapter according to over-tourism.

The present book, at the best for this reviewer, evinces the philosophical quandary revolving around tourism: the quest of consuming authentic landscapes invariably creates staged-authentic commodities. As Dean MacCannell observes, the quest of authenticity is doomed to the fabrication of idealised and picturesque landscape where people want to play to be what in real life they are not. In this vein, over-tourism and tourist-phobia are inexorably intertwined. Anthropologically speaking, our home marks the borders between our front and back-stage. Tourism seems to be stimulated but at the same time limited to operate in the constellations of our front-stage, where relations are naïve, causal or subordinated to the dependency to what the guest demands. Contrariwise, our attempts to keep up appearances end when we enter at the back-stage, where the inner-most world and emotions are not repressed. Over tourism can be explained as the counter-reaction of the collective self when the right of privacy is violated (MacCannell 1976; Korstanje, 2016). Having said this, readers who like to read *Over-tourism: excesses, discontents and Measure in travel and Tourism*, will surely find a high-quality work dotted with different viewpoints and study-cases but enrooted in the same common-thread argument: we look to stimulate the benefits of tourism while ambiguously are loath to accept their inevitable collateral damages.

References

- Blazquez Salom, M. (2019) 'Tourist gentrification of retail shop in Palma Majorca', in Milano, C., Cheer, J.M. and Novelli, M. (Eds.): *Overtourism: Excesses, Discontents and Measures in Travel and Tourism*, CABI, pp.39–69.
- Canosa, A. et al. (2019) 'My overloved Town: the challenges of growing up in a small coastal destination', in Milano, C., Cheer, J.M. and Novelli, M. (Eds.): *Overtourism: Excesses, Discontents and Measures in Travel and Tourism*, CABI, pp.190–204.
- Costa, C. et al. (2019) 'Short term accomodation and overtourism in portuguese urban centers', in Milano, C., Cheer, J.M. and Novelli, M. (Eds.): *Overtourism: Excesses, Discontents and Measures in Travel and Tourism*, CABI, pp.167–189.
- Korstanje, M.E. (2016) 'The portrait of Dean MacCannell—towards an understanding of capitalism', *Anatolia*, Vol. 27, No. 2, pp.298–304.
- MacCannell, D. (1976) *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, University of California Press, Berkeley.