

Book review

D. Weaver, *Advanced Introduction to Sustainable Tourism* (Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA 2020) 168 pp.

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Having taught sustainable tourism development for over a decade, I have constantly kept my eyes open for a course book that would provide insights and question-provoking content for more advanced level students as well as teachers. Even during my first reading, it became obvious that David Weaver's *Advanced Introduction to Sustainable Tourism* is a very nice book for this purpose.

Sustainable tourism is a concept that evolves constantly. The three (or four, depending on definition) pillars of sustainability – ecological (or environmental), sociocultural and economic (for example, see Butler 1999) – have maintained their position as the 'triple bottom line' to which Weaver also refers. However, viewpoints and approaches change as our understanding of sustainability improves and new knowledge becomes available (Saarinen 2006; Buckley 2012; Bramwell/Lane 2015). Sustainability is also a highly contextual term, and it seems that we have not yet reached the ultimate truths and principles of sustainability in tourism. Our own experiences and interpretations influence the ways we approach the topic; and, as Weaver points out in his book, neutrality is difficult to obtain, especially when one is passionate about the topic.

According to the book's introduction, it is 'a critical review of sustainable tourism, from its beginning ... to the present', focusing especially on 'the convergence of mass and "alternative" tourism'. There are seven chapters in the book, starting with an introduction to the era of tourism. Already in this first chapter it becomes clear that this is indeed an advanced-level book, as not much space is reserved for explaining the basic concepts of tourism or the nuances that the different definitions of the concepts may have. Rather, the main finding of the chapter deals with the global 'tourisystem', which, according to Weaver, provides 'an appropriate framework for engaging with sustainability at all scales' (p. 18). It is noteworthy that the economic importance of tourism becomes clear at a very early stage.

The next chapter presents the 'dawn of sustainable tourism', and the economic aspect remains equally strong; for instance, discussion on the advocacy platform and on the impacts of tourism start from the economic rather than the environmental or social viewpoints. One may ponder whether this kind of approach actually strengthens the economic aspect taking over the other elements of the triple bottom line or not. This phenomenon seems to occur in tourism development discourses rather often, for instance in the form of tourist numbers and tourism's impact on employment acting as indicators for sustainable development plans and strategies (for example see the Sustainable Travel Finland programme). All in all, Chapter 2 could initiate very fruitful discussions in classrooms. Weaver captures in a very clever and compact way

the essences and problems associated with the different definitions of sustainable tourism. Climate change is brought on stage in this chapter for the first time. Quite surprisingly, I found no reference to Lenzen et al.'s (2018) study, which had a huge impact on climate change discourse in tourism, especially outside academia.

The dichotomy and the merger of mass and alternative tourism are presented in Chapter 3. I very much enjoyed reading the 'stories' behind mass and alternative tourism, and how considerations of the two opposites of tourism have changed over time, also in Weaver's own studies. Mass and alternative tourism are issues that raise a lot of discussion among tourism students. Chapter 3 is perfect for giving food for thought for such reflections. After alternative tourism is abandoned as a polarity to mass tourism, in Chapter 4 the book delves into the pursuit of sustainable mass tourism. At first this chapter refers to indicators as expressions of progress toward sustainable tourism. After that, the focus is on quality control tools, which Weaver defines as 'infrastructure through which that progress ... is articulated, operationalised and realised' (p. 69). The subchapter on 'destination planning and management' discusses the stakeholders' roles and strategies for optimising visitation distribution and behaviour to enhance sustainability at the destination level. Finally, community engagement and views are discussed with the term 'resident-responsive' tourism, thereby replacing community-based tourism.

In Chapter 5, the reader gets a chance to reflect on the topics covered so far in 'selected sustainable tourism contexts'. These include protected areas, indigenous people, China and small islands, all of them contexts where tourism has grown rapidly and where sustainability is thus as important as ever. Ecotourism is discussed within the framework of protected areas, and Weaver touches upon proximate communities as well. This has become an increasingly important topic under the impact of COVID-19, when masses of tourists and visitors have discovered national parks and similar areas to an extent that can sometimes turn into over-tourism. The Chinese context is also very interesting, and most probably helpful for tourism planners and developers in regions where Chinese tourism is at its early stage.

Since my own research in tourism mostly focuses on climate change and global environmental change, I was very much looking forward to Chapter 6, which deals with emerging trends in sustainable tourism. All in all, Weaver manages to grasp and explain several important aspects in the four+ pages that he has reserved for climate change. These include not only the global-local nexus, last-chance tourism, adaptation, mitigation and growing awareness, but also the narratives and reasons that paralyse climate action. The chapter continues with resilience and smart tourism, which both intertwine with the previous topic. Resilience is discussed in terms of its 'amalgamation' with sustainability in destination-level planning and management, and Weaver provides an illustrative explanation of what is actually meant by this amalgamation. In relation to smart tourism, the conclusion is that destinations should both engage and disengage with technology to achieve truly smart and sustainable outcomes.

This volume, as mentioned at the very beginning, is a good read not only for advanced students but also for us teachers/researchers. It quite nicely provides an overview of the past phases of sustainable tourism and manages to shed light on current issues as well, especially on the highly topical climate change. However, I doubt that destination managers or tourism officials will find this book as their main source of sustainability information for two reasons: first, the reader has to have a good understanding not only of tourism as a phenomenon (which, I guess, the above-mentioned should have) but also of sustainable development, as Weaver does

not explain everything from the beginning. Second, Weaver himself emphasises the ‘prevailing knowledge hegemony’ (p. viii) of the West that is reflected in his book. He hopes that those reading the book outside this cultural context will be inspired to develop their own contextualised understanding of sustainable tourism – which may be a rather demanding task for persons outside academia. Having said that, by no means am I suggesting that this book could not serve as inspiration to anyone interested in sustainability in tourism. Thank you, David, for sharing your ‘40-year academic engagement with sustainable tourism’ with us! As the concluding chapter emphasises, we are progressing in sustainability, but healthy doubt about and respect for differing perspectives are prerequisites for any kind of progress.

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