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Book review

Douglas G. Pearce, *Tourist Destinations: Structure and Synthesis* (CABI, Wallingford, UK and Boston, MA, USA 2021) 288 pp.

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This book has the stated goal of synthesizing different research streams 'to provide a more comprehensive and coherent picture and fuller understanding of destinations, their structure and how they function' (p. 1). To accomplish this purpose, this widely published author, Pearce, focuses on drawing together two approaches to explain the structure of destinations: the study of spatial structures (their physical locations, distribution, configurations and interconnectedness of their products, services and actors); and the study of organizational structures (their make-up or composition and the various ways and configurations by which their multiple actors, collectively and individually, behave and interact to produce the experiences sought by visitors). While the chapter titles are somewhat explanatory, a brief overview of each chapter follows.

Chapter 1: Introduction: The Spatial and Organizational Structure of Destinations. This serves as both an introduction to the topic and an overview of the book's logic. As an introduction, it heavily relies on Pearce's 1995 work for definitions and the book's rationale. The book's logic is to report and synthesize relevant empirical research on the tangible (physical and spatial structure) and intangible (organizational structure) aspects of major types of tourist destinations.

Chapter 2: Perspectives on Destinations. This chapter explores various definitions of a destination, and concludes that more work is needed to find a consensus given the number of alternatives. Tourist destinations have three reoccurring characteristics: they include multiple elements, identify a significant geographical dimension, and are rarely studied through a holistic lens. Instead studies commonly adopt either a supply (the multiple providers of resources) or demand (tourists' needs, perspectives and experiences) viewpoint. Destination research tends to investigate destinations from one of two distinct meanings – a place one travels to (that is, an end point for a traveler) or a physical place where tourism has developed.

Chapter 3: Frameworks for Tourist Destinations. This chapter extends Pearce's 2014 work by presenting and detailing six frameworks that are used to explain destinations on their incorporation of three key issues: geographic (place and space); mode of production or organization (structure, behavior, and actors); and dynamics (structural evolution, changing places, and driving factors). These six frameworks are industrial districts, clusters, networks, systems, social constructs, and assemblages. The author employs these frameworks throughout the later chapters to explain the phenomena being discussed in each chapter.

Chapter 4: Analysing the Structure of Destinations. This chapter explores the context and environments in which destinations evolve. It seeks to answer the questions: what are the social, economic, and historical contexts in which a destination is set; what are its physical characteristics; and how do these factors influence its

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organizational form and functioning? Answering these questions includes discussions of competitive factors, land use alternatives, physical factors, and administrative structures and processes within which a destination operates. The chapter begins with a discussion of the spatial structure of destinations that focuses on their location, distribution of components, and their interactions. The main focus, though, is to analyze organizational structures. Pearce offers applications of the frameworks presented in Chapter 3 as ways to explain these organizational structures.

Chapter 5: Structure of National Destinations. This chapter seeks to synthesize research findings about how a country attracts both international and domestic visitors. This includes reviews of country-specific travel pattern data and distribution of supply data. An in-depth analysis of New Zealand's visitors offers a systematic review of how supply and demand patterns intersect. The chapter concludes that further research is needed on how international travel is spatially concentrated, how tourist attractions focus visitor travel to specific places, and how a specific location may serve multiple functions such as a chosen destination or a gateway to a circuit of other destinations.

Chapter 6: Structure of Regional Destinations. Since research shows that many travelers visit only one or two regions, regions are discussed as a bridging level of analysis between national and local destinations. The chapter discusses factors related to supply and demand. In the analysis of supply, the distribution of tourism services can be organized into patterns that respond to demand patterns. Pearce suggests that network analysis is especially useful in understanding regions. He concludes from his review of the research that 'tourism is concentrated geographically within regions, a hierarchy of local destinations exists and spatial variations occur in the types of destinations, their structure, levels of dynamism and types of visitors they attract' (p. 130).

Chapter 7: Structure of Urban Destinations. This chapter emphasizes the spatial structure of urban destinations and where attractions, activities, and accommodation facilities are located. Since there are many reasons for people to visit urban areas (for example, tourist attractions, events, meetings, and business), drawing general conclusions is challenging. Nonetheless, research reveals that what people do in urban areas is not random but purpose-driven, both in where they go in the destination and where they stay while there. While the research is sparse on business travelers and on urban organizational issues, much is known about tourism in urban settings. Morphology – the study of 'form and function of places, the relationships among them, and how they change over time' (Liu/Wall 2009: 340) – is a critical factor in explaining tourist behavior in multi-functional cities, while network analysis is a significant framework for understanding those relationships.

Chapter 8: Structure of Coastal Resorts. This chapter focuses on the morphology of coastal resorts, with an emphasis on land use and accommodation layout and location. An assessment of the explanatory value of the industrial model, agglomeration, and clusters frameworks is offered. Multiple case studies illustrate commonalities in the way coastal resorts spatially arrange their structural features.

Chapter 9: Structure of Ski Resorts and Rural and Natural Area Destinations. The chapter is divided into two sections. The first section provides a detailed analysis of the way in which ski resorts are developed, organized, and managed. The relationship between accommodations and skiing facilities is the dominant influence on both spatial arrangements and organizational structures. Special emphasis is given to government versus corporate management and how each governance structure has different goals. The rural and natural areas section emphasizes the challenges of management of clusters of mostly smaller organizations. Rural area destinations mostly refer to

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agritourism and trails, while natural area destinations focus on the role of private versus governmental management.

Chapter 10: Spatial and Organizational Structure of Destinations: a Synthesis. This chapter is an excellent synthesis as Pearce ties together the large volume of research reviewed in earlier chapters. He organizes the synthesis into a spatial discussion and an organizational discussion to point out the need to integrate these two largely separated literatures in order to understand destinations and how they function for tourists. Based on his topical breakdown, Pearce offers a way forward by asking key questions to spotlight gaps in the research literature. While conceding the huge variance in destination organization, spatial relationships, and attractions for tourists, this concluding chapter identifies many potential research topics that can synthesize the various streams of knowledge identified across this book.

Overall, this extensive research review and synthesis offers an excellent starting point for scholars seeking ideas and knowledge gaps for their own research. It is very strong on reviewing prior research, especially Pearce's. More coverage of how the internet has changed both travel patterns and tourist search behavior would be a welcome addition as so much has changed in the past few years because of technology. While Pearce acknowledges how Airbnb is changing spatial patterns of accommodation, there are other changes worth consideration. For example, the rise of the 'gig' economy to provide transportation or local tour guides, the availability of virtual tours as substitutes for travel, and online tourism information and support systems are all changing both supply and demand patterns as well as channels of distribution and destinations' organization. Some coverage of evolving frameworks, such as ecosystems, would also be welcomed to better include all destination stakeholders (for example, Ness 2021; Shipilov/Gawer 2020).

This book's strength and weakness is that it dwells heavily on description and not enough on prescription. While it presents an extensive review of the literature, it would benefit from providing more integration of the research reviewed. This is not an easy book to read, and its writing style best fits graduate students or academic peers who wish to capture the literature on this topic. In many respects this is unfortunate as it contains not only an extensive review of the literature on destinations but also the deeply reflective thoughts on this topic by a learned colleague who has much to say about what holes exist in the extant literature and how important it is to address them.

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